If observation is not, in the end, participatory and self-reflexive, then it is not human. (Taylor as cited in MacDougall 1998: 3).

University of Alberta

Potlucks, Bingo and Roadtrips: The Prince George Métis Elders Oral History Video Project

By

Marni Amirault

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of
Mrs. Florence Aubichon
and my uncles,
Ellie, Charlie and Brian.

Abstract

This thesis examines a filmmaking project initiated by the Prince George Métis Elders' Society (PGMES) in Prince George British Columbia in an effort to create an oral history video for their grandchildren and their community. This endeavour was undertaken in collaboration with a multi-disciplinary research team comprised of individuals from two academic institutions; the Okanagan University College, in Kelowna British Columbia, and the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Alberta. Following Ginsburg (2002), who argues for an analytic emphasis to be placed on the *processes* of indigenous media production, (as opposed to the end product), this thesis attempts to answer the question: Traditionally an exercise in hierarchy and top-down production, can filmmaking be seen as an exercise in collaboration?

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Chapter 1

Introduction

June 1999, I participated in an archaeological/ethnographical field school offered through Yukon College in Whitehorse, Yukon. For six weeks (minus a one-week Alaskan excursion) four other students and I made the banks of the Yukon River our home. Our return trip from Alaska brought us to Beaver Creek, Yukon, a small Native community ten kilometres from the Alaskan/Yukon boarder. Friends of our field director had generously allowed us to set up tents in their back yard for the duration of our stay, offering us access to their bathroom, kitchen and television. Watching television in Beaver Creek, I learned about a new network set to air September 01 of that same year. I was told that the programming on the Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN) would consist of Aboriginal content made *by* Aboriginal people, *for* Aboriginal people; I clearly remember one of our hosts saying they were looking forward to seeing their own people on television for a change. I thought about this as we watched rugged Harrison Ford and perky Anne Heche wade waist deep through a swamp, in some unnamed jungle, somewhere in the tropics. Indeed, Aboriginal people have been largely invisible in present-day media.

Some five years after my first field experience, I have become acquainted with programming on APTN and issues of self-representation in film and television. In fact, these issues have informed and shaped my entire academic focus. For my undergraduate thesis, I chose to write about the effects of a local television production company on the community of Igloolik, Nunavut after their first feature length film, *Atanarjuat: The Fast*

Runner was complete.

Field work for the present discussion allowed me to participate in the filmmaking process. This Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded initiative will eventually culminate in the production of an oral history video and other media related projects for the Prince George Métis Elders Society (PGMES) in Prince George, British Columbia.

My involvement in the PGMES Oral History Video Project began January 2004 when I was invited by Dr. Mike Evans to Prince George for a meeting with the PGMES and several researchers, some of whom would later form the 'research team' of this collaborative undertaking. I returned to Prince George for a weekend in March, 2004 when an invitation was extended by another Elders' group to attend and film a Métis culture workshop. This organization, the Nechako Fraser Métis Elders' Society had recently separated from the PGMES, forming their own organization, taking several PGMES members with them in the process.

I lived in the community of Prince George from June 17, 2004 until August 01, 2004. The initial idea for this research involved me accompanying the Elders to and from their annual pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne and record on film events as they occurred. As will become clear later in this text, additional opportunities for travel were presented by the Elders themselves, broadening my research to include more excursions than this one pilgrimage. I returned to Prince George for a final, one week visit in September, 2004, at which time the PGMES held their own Métis culture workshop.

The principal method of investigation for this thesis is participant-observation.

For the duration of my field term in Prince George, I worked in the PGMES office as a volunteer. My primary duty was to assist the PGMES in writing funding proposals. As participant-observation is my primary research method, I rely on my field journal, photographs and to a lesser degree, video taken during the summer 2004 as data. The discussion in Chapter III is where the largest concentration of this information can be found. It should also be noted that some of the materials presented here have been crafted from papers written for courses taken during the first year of my Master's degree. The photos used throughout this thesis are provided courtesy of the Prince George Métis Elders' Society Oral History Video Project and are included in the thesis as illustrations to the text. Materials that appear in the thesis have been published with permission.

In *Mediating Culture: Indigenous Media, Ethnographic Film and the Production of Identity,* Faye Ginsburg suggests that Indigenous filmmaking should not be seen as merely a 'window' through which one views another culture, but it should be examined as a 'social process' and 'cultural product' in and of itself (2002). Ginsburg states further, that "[a]nalysis needs to focus less on the formal qualities of film and video as text and more on the cultural *mediations* (original emphasis) that occur through film and video works" (2002: 212). In this perspective, not only should the social processes that develop around filmmaking be examined, but the processes of production and reception should be observed as well.

In an effort to contribute to literature written in the sub-discipline of Visual Anthropology, this thesis attempts to discern whether this filmmaking project can be seen as an exercise in collaboration. Chapter One discusses the importance of self-

representation for Aboriginal peoples in media. This discussion is followed with an outline of recent collaborative and indigenous filmmaking efforts. Chapter Two describes the Prince George Métis Elders Society, from the perspective of the organization's role in the lives of the Elders and in the community of Prince George, in general. Chapter Three outlines this collaborative initiative undertaken by the PGMES and the research team, discussing the roles of those involved in addition to events recorded during my participation. Finally, Chapter Four examines the project through the lens of a collaborative effort, paying attention to issues such as power relations, notions of contribution and collaboration and material storage, concluding with an analysis of the project and project's goals.

Participatory /collaborative research

Currently, many academic research projects recognize community based participatory research (CBPR) as an essential component of research. Interestingly, much of the anthropological material published on this research method comes from reflections of people engaged in health research. What is CBPR? Very loosely, it is "… a broad term for a wide range of approaches to empowering community members to engage in research that increases citizen power and voice in communities … [and] encompass a number of activities that are both directly and peripherally related to the research itself" (Taylor et al: 2002: 4). More precisely,

> CBPR is a philosophy and method that seeks to engage people and communities in all phases of research from the conceptualization of the research problem to the dissemination of the results. At its core it is about relationship building between diverse communities, contributing to local self-sufficiency, and recognizing the

> inquiries that exist between people and places. It is oriented to the application of practical knowledge to locally defined issues in a way that provides long-term improvement in the quality of life of a group of people be that physical, intellectual, interpersonal, or political. The approach accepts first and foremost that all inquiry is political by definition; information does not exist in a vacuum but is generated within a specific articulation of power and is interpreted within the confines of established intellectual structures. As a philosophy, CBPR is inclusive of different ways of seeing the world. It incorporates multiple perspectives. It recognizes local knowledge systems as valid on their own epistemological foundations and views them as contributing to a larger understanding of the world and the place of humans in it. It takes as an a priori assumption that research and science are not value free. They can be used to help people help themselves in their daily struggles or they can be used to subjugate local opinion and action (Fletcher 2003: 32).

What happens, then, when this method of participatory, community based research is employed in a filmmaking project? Given the resources, prestige and power inherent in contemporary media, can ideas of equality and collaboration coexist or be fostered through it? Traditionally, filmmaking is seen and practiced as a process of 'top-down' production. Only certain individuals hold the prestigious titles, such as *director*, or *editor* and are by extension of these titles, given the privilege of making the major decisions that impact the final product.

The Aboriginal People's Television Network

APTN has arranged to work in the structures of media production, while subverting them at the same time. This network was created out of Television Northern Canada (TVNC), a pre-existing, federally funded satellite service which began broadcasting in 1992. "Owned and programmed by thirteen Aboriginal broadcast groups,

plus government and education organizations located in the North, it is a pan-Arctic satellite service that distributes one hundred hours of programming to ninety-four Northern communities" (Roth, 2003). TVNC was put in place to serve northern communities, entering approximately one hundred thousand homes roughly equally divided between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities (Alia, 1999). TVNC founders envisioned a fully pan-Arctic and Canada-wide network that promised to greatly enhance opportunities for north-south communication. "In 1998 TVNC petitioned the CRTC [Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission] to become a national Aboriginal television service, and in 1999 received permission to become the Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN)" (Alia, 1999: 104). The move from northern (TVNC) to national (APTN) was the result of a thirty percent funding cut set to effect TVNC during the 1997 and 1998 season (Alia 1999).

APTN was included in every basic cable package in southern Canada for an additional CDN 0.15 on the cable bill, and broadcast to the Canadian north free of charge. Native American film director Beverly Singer states, the advent of APTN marks "...the first time in broadcast history that indigenous stories will be produced for international audiences and broadcast on a national television network dedicated to Aboriginal programming" (Singer 2001: 93).

Back lash from the CRTC's decision came mainly from cable companies due to the costs that an additional national and therefore mandatory channel would create (Roth 2000). In other circles, the potential positioning of APTN as another *national* television station; equivalent at least symbolically to The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

(CBC); was not well received. One editorial from The Vancouver Province states, "...while Ottawa can make consumers pay for the new channel, it can't make them watch it. It's a good job APTN won't have to rely on Vancouver ratings to pay its way" (1999: A-36; as cited in Roth 2000: 265). Like the place of Aboriginal peoples, indigenous media is ambiguous in the national context.

Not all reactions to APTN were negative, as can be seen in another editorial, this one from *The Globe and Mail*.

> Television is so confusing. At the same time that it isn't reality, it is authenticity. Just to be seen on TV makes people genuine in a way that almost nothing else in 20th-century culture does. This is the psychological underpinning for the CRTC's recent decision to grant a license for an aboriginal television network. Not only will the Aboriginal People's Television Network be a place for native people to present themselves to one another in English, French and 15 native languages, but it will be an electronic arena in which many Canadians will encounter aboriginals in ways they might never do otherwise. Native cooking, native children's programs and native talk shows must make native existence both wider and more authentic. That's why we support the CRTC's decision to make this channel part of the basic cable package. Not only will it provide a secure source of funding for the APTN's programs, but it will make the network something people will chance upon as they click their way along the TV dial. Aboriginal television will be inescapable. And that inescapability will express something that the isolation and marginality of many native peoples' lives often obscures. Their relation to other Canadians isn't tangential; it is inevitable (*The Globe and Mail*, 1999: A-16; as cited in Roth 2000: 264).

Issues found in this editorial are more relevant now than when it was written.

Television programming in 2005 has become increasingly concerned with an ersatz version of tribalism and globalization. In 2000, *Survivor* graced American airwaves and has provided the predominant model for manufactured 'reality' television ever since. With the advent of *Survivor*, television voyeurism in the form of this and countless other 'reality' programs have become a staple of television viewing. Even Canada's Food Network has begun to produce its own reality shows. With so many people vying for a chance to be seen on television, *has* APTN become 'inescapable' as *The Globe and Mail's* editorial suggests? Furthermore, does APTN offer non-Aboriginal Canadians an opportunity to acquaint themselves with Canadian Aboriginal peoples in a way that acts to soften cultural misunderstanding?

Curious to see the nature of programming APTN would bring its viewers, I made a mental note to tune in to the network upon my return from the Yukon. I remember being somewhat alarmed, and admittedly disappointed the Saturday night when *Bingo and a Movie* presented its audience with a film of the 'Cowboy and Indian' genre. There were no native chefs, talk show hosts, or Aboriginal musicians. Instead, viewers were treated to images of "[s]moke signals, and feathered bonnets, arrows and lances, faces in war paint, painted ponies and frenzied dances, the reeking scalp (more often referred to than seen), the obligatory warriors on the distant ridge, the bloody aftermath of the massacre ..." (Prats 2002: 24).

The Searchers (1956), *Geronimo* (1962), *Broken Arrow* (1950), *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964); these are but a handful of films to offer audiences the stereotyped "Indian" of the Hollywood film industry. This compressed Indian was created to solidly

represent hundreds of unique and diverse First Nations cultures within North America. Stuart Hall, in *The Work of Representation* defines representation as "the production of the meaning of concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to *refer* to either the 'real' world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events [original emphasis]" (Hall 1997: 17). As Hall states, every person conceptualizes and interprets their experiences and the world around them through the filter of shared culture; a map of meaning constructed by the system of representation that becomes manifest in cultural codes.

The distinction between 'imaginary' and 'real' is important to the discussion here. Most Hollywood films in which Aboriginal peoples are portrayed are made by individuals not in possession of the shared cultural map required to offer a responsible and realistic representation of the people and cultures they set out to portray. Oftentimes, stereotypes, or 'images that injure ... that caricature, lessen, diminish, in short, images that simplify" (Nugyet 2002: 56) are employed. Stereotypes are easily recognizable and formulaic, therefore easy for film producers to utilize and audiences to process. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the 'Cowboy and Indian' genre of film on APTN seemed to work against the network's initiative of self-representation.

Stereotypy is not absolute, however. Even 'Hollywood's idea of frontiers savagery' (Prats 2002) holds a place in the narratives of Aboriginal peoples. Some who watch the Cowboy and Indian genre do so because they recognize their aunties, uncles, grandparents and other relatives as they appear on screen (Andie Palmer, personal

communication 2003). With that in mind, it can be said that Cowboy and Indian films offer an alternative function that I had not previously considered. Those who are stereotyped may have some agency in reinterpreting their representations thus producing a positive image of self and society, challenging initial perceptions of both the material and original intent.

The importance of self-representation in film

The genesis of Aboriginal stereotypes emerged through journal entries and letters written by explorers and missionaries during the period of first contact and beyond (Francis 1992; King 2003). A description penned by Jonas Johannis Michalus of the people he met in North America as "savage and wild, strangers to all decency, yea, uncivil and as stupid as garden poles" (as cited in King, 2003: 77) is not easily forgotten. Antagonistic descriptors such as those above, clearly assume that Native Americans have been correctly "... placed in the lower echelons of intelligence by many Euro-Americans since first contact was made" (Kilpatrick 1999: xvii). These, and countless other renderings of cultures found on foreign shores, it can be said, were seeds planted in the imagination of Europeans that later rooted themselves securely in white Euro-American narratives.

In *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative,* Thomas King, author of Cherokee and Greek descent, states

> [w]ithin the North American imagination, Native people have always been an exotic, erotic, terrifying presence. Much like the vast tracks of wilderness that early explorers and settlers faced. But most of all, Native people have been confusing. The panorama of cultures, the innumerable

> tribes, and the complex of languages made it impossible for North Americans to find what they most desired.
>
> A single Indian who could stand for the whole.
>
> But if North Americans couldn't find him, they could make him up (King 2003: 79).

And 'make him up', they did. As Daniel Francis in *The Imaginary Indian* states further, "[t]he Indian began as a White man's mistake, and became a White man's fantasy. Through the prism of White hopes, fears and prejudices, indigenous Americans would be seen to have lost contact with reality and to have become 'Indians'; that is, anything non-Natives wanted them to be" (1992: 4-5).

During the late 1800s, early 1900s, Euro-Americans falsely saw Native cultures as teetering dangerously close to the brink of extinction. Many Canadian artists; most notably, Paul Kane, Frederick Arthur Verner, Edmund Morris, even the beloved Emily Carr; were considered 'documentary artists' creating 'realistic' depictions of Canada's disappearing Indian (Francis 1992). Photographer Edward S. Curtis' work is also well known for his staged and constructed images of Native American peoples, taken in the spirit of retaining for posterity all that would soon disappear. Taking the conception of the 'disappearing Indian' to the far (and disturbing) extreme, we turn to the stories of the Yaki Indian named Ishi (Francis 1992) and Minik, the young Inuit boy brought from the Arctic with his family by explorer Robert Peary (Harper 2000). These individuals became living museum displays, which people gravitated toward in droves in order to satisfy their curiosities about the 'exotic other'. Ishi and Minik, became "...public symbol[s] of 'the last Indian' whose death[s] represented for many Americans the demise of an entire race" (Francis 1992: 38).

After paintings, photographs and museum displays, the Indian found its way into dime store novels and later; with the advent of technology; into Hollywood films. As King states, this constructed and finite past

> ... trapped Native people in a time warp, it
> also insisted that our past was all we had.
> No present.
> No Future.
> And to believe in such a past is to be dead
> (2003: 106).

As we have seen above however, the systems of meaning employed to represent, in this case, Aboriginal culture in film, are not static. It always has capacity for change.

By engaging in what Faye Ginsburg calls 'screen memories' (2002a), people from many Aboriginal communities have begun to create their own film and video that talks back to negative representations produced by others. Faced with the proposition of existing in a past that was dead, "... and knowing from empirical evidence that we were very much alive, physically, and culturally, Native writers [and more recently, Native filmmakers] began to use the Native present as a way to resurrect a Native past and to imagine a Native future" (King, 2003: 106). Many contemporary narratives presented through Aboriginal media possess a common theme; the positioning of Aboriginal peoples in the present, creating a modern Aboriginal identity, instead of relying on the frozen and clichéd images of the past.

Through the employment of media as a tool for cultural activism, Aboriginal peoples within the last thirty or so years have also begun to transmit their knowledge within their own communities and to the world outside as well, creating in the process, previously unavailable networks of communication. Of equal importance is the ability

for Aboriginal media-makers to insert "an indigenous presence into the mediascapes of the nations that encompass them" (Ginsburg and Roth, 2002: 130) as has been attempted by initiatives like the Aboriginal People's Television Network here in Canada.

In addition to the goals set by APTN outlined above, the network aims to place Aboriginal peoples in a modern context while generating empowerment among Aboriginal peoples (especially youth) at the same time. *Buffalo Tracks*, for example, was created in the image of the Johnny Carson Show only "...20 years later, with our own flare". The program's producer Gary Farmer states further, "I wanted to take TV that my Dad loved and shape it into our own. I also wanted to create a hit for the network. A show everyone could relate to, for all nations, but showcasing our own style, interests and dreams" (http://www.buffalotracks.com, retrieved November 20, 2003). *Buffalo Tracks* is recorded before a live studio audience, complete with a host, co-host and house band.

The mandate of youth empowerment was set for APTN by the CRTC following Decision CRTC 99-42 made February 22, 1999. As one intervener writing in support of the network states, APTN will "give a strong voice to a lot of children and youth ... and give them the message that there is something out there for us, that we can become something and live up to our dreams" (http://www.crtc.gc.ca/archive/ENG/Decisons/1999D99-42.HTM, retrieved April, 2003). Two of APTN's youth-targeted programs come from Big Soul Productions, spearheaded by Ms. Laura Milliken and Ms. Jennifer Podemski.

Moccasin Flats; a youth-driven, gritty drama; was born through repREZentin'; Big Soul's media empowerment filmmaking workshops for Aboriginal youth

(http//www.bigsoul.net). Through these workshops, high risk urban Aboriginal youth are hired and trained in all aspects of film and video. *Moccasin Flats* also holds the distinction of being Canada's first dramatic television series created, written, produced and performed by an exclusively Aboriginal production team.

Another Big Soul creation, *The Seventh Generation* profiled ninety-one Aboriginal youth achievers from a myriad of fields and was produced for APTN for three seasons. The program now runs in syndication on APTN and several other networks. At its inception, producers of *The Seventh Generation* experienced many misconceptions pertaining to First Nations communities in Canada. In an interview with Nunatsiaq News, producer and host Jennifer Podemski discusses how *The Seventh Generation* was turned down by Ford when the company was asked to sponsor the program's first season. "The woman I met with told me that Ford wasn't interested because Native people don't have enough money to buy their products. And I thought, 'Have you been to an Indian reserve? You should see how many people are driving new Ford Explorers" (Blackduck 2001: 23; see Daveluy 2005 for similar discussion regarding Inuit).

As becomes plain when considering programs mentioned above, and others such as *APTN Mainstage*, *Cooking With the Wolfman*, or *Creative Native*, a portion of APTN's programming has borrowed its format from North American television. Because these initiatives target one of Canada's fastest growing population sectors, Aboriginal youth, some of the programs on APTN tend to alienate another important group in the Aboriginal community; the Elders. There is a portion of APTN programming that draws directly from the Elder population, where Elders are interviewed or asked to recount

stories and myths for the camera in their own language. The setting for these interviews is often times river banks, or the facade of a frontier-style cabin, lending a relaxed and more natural setting to these discussions while at the same time, positioning the Elders in the present.

As the diversity of APTN shows, there are multiple Aboriginal intents, themes and audiences at play in the self-representation at a national level. By taking control of television programming and creating their own media, Canadian Aboriginal peoples have inserted themselves into Thomas King's Native present, creating a contemporary picture of themselves. In contrast to stereotypes like the noble savage and the Indian princess, Canada's Aboriginal peoples are framing themselves in light of who they truly are: hip-hop artists, actors, journalists, musicians, aids activists, producers, educators, war heroes, and on and on.

Collaborative/participatory filmmaking in indigenous communities

The advent of mass-media technology, in particular satellite television and small-scale digital video, has enabled people living in Indigenous communities to take video cameras into their hands in an effort to create their own media representations (Alia 1999; Amirault 2001; Ginsburg 2002a; Turner 2002). Not only is film and video equipment becoming more and more affordable,[1] but media presence in the home and by extension, the daily lives of individuals has reached unprecedented levels. Whether one embraces, rejects or disregards media remains a personal choice, but at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it becomes increasingly difficult not to become affected in some way. All

[1] It should be noted that this is not the case for everyone wishing to participate in media-making.

of these factors have contributed to a movement in indigenous communities whereby people are beginning to produce their own images. Often times, assistance from outside the community is required, at least in the preliminary stages.

Perhaps the first example where a collaborative relationship between researcher and researched informed the filmmaking process can be seen in Robert Flaherty's 1922 classic, *Nanook of the North.* This film has broken ground on several fronts. The film was not shot on a sound stage where environments are simulated, but in the Canadian Arctic where one is at the mercy of the elements. Flaherty "...depended on his hosts for survival, for film production and even for his camera, which they repaired after he had given up on it" (Alia 1987: 64). Flaherty claimed to present Inuit as they saw themselves and not from his own lens. He also involved the individuals with whom he worked in the screening of rushes, asking them to discern what was accurate and what was not (Alia 1999). Not only is *Nanook* said to have set the stage for future collaborative efforts in filmmaking, it is also said to be the first example of ethnographic, as well as documentary film (Alia 1999).

Though *Nanook of the North* was a highly acclaimed film in its day, over time, Flaherty's work has generated its fair share of criticism. Questions pertaining to the film's status as 'documentary' arise when considering that oftentimes, staged scenes were passed off as naturally occurring events (Ginsburg 2002a). However, in addition to setting parameters for a new medium in film, Flaherty's representation of the people with whom he worked so closely has often been scrutinized. Alia states, that while "Flaherty expressed genuine respect for Inuit and their accomplishments; he also betrayed

paternalistic, racist assumptions about their 'primitiveness'" (1999: 18). On the whole, however, it can be said that *Nanook of the North* effectively conveys to its audience the spirit and culture of its Inuit subjects. In contrast, some twenty years after Flaherty's film, Arctic explorer Robert Peary portrayed his Inuit assistants as 'mere childlike servants' (Alia: 1987: 1999).

The seminal study conducted on collaborative filmmaking is *Through Navajo Eyes* written by Sol Worth and John Adair in 1972. The objective of this examination was to "determine whether we could teach people with a culture different from ours to make motion pictures depicting their culture as *they* saw fit" (Worth and Adair 1972: 11[original emphasis]). Through work that Worth had done with African American youth involving film in the early 1960s, he was able to ascertain that "[a]dolescents and young adults who are unable to talk about themselves or write about themselves are frequently willing and even eager to reveal themselves and their world on film" (1972: 14). Further, Worth and Adair "reasoned that if a member of the culture being studied could be trained to use the medium so that with his hand on the camera and editing equipment he could choose what interested him, we would come closer to capturing *his* vision of *his* world" (1972: 15[original emphasis]). Since the study conducted by Worth and Adair, many others have worked in cooperation with Indigenous communities to create film.

Anthropologist and filmmaker Harald Prins has worked in collaboration with Aboriginal communities on many film projects. *Our Lives in Our Hands* (1986) was filmed in the community of Houlton, Maine, USA in the early 1980s. This project

discusses Mi'kmaq basketry and how the people of this community came to rely on an aspect of traditional culture as a means of survival. In his article, Prins characterizes the community of Houlton at the time of his arrival as 'depressed and depressing', stating that most families lived in shacks and suffered poor health, relying on a combination of social assistance or subsistence farming, and/or logging to get by (Prins 2002). At this time, residents supplemented their incomes with craft production, the most common of which was basketry (McBride 1990; Prins 2002). Resident basket maker, Sarah Lund states, "[w]e made baskets because choices were few and we had to eat. If I needed flour or baking powder, I'd make a half dozen baskets, go to the store, and trade them for as many groceries as the store owner said they were worth" (as cited in McBride 1990: ix).

In 1982, the community approached Prins, asking him to assist in the production of a documentary film which would provide the community with a way to "... debunk negative stereotypes and avoid the romantic exoticism of Hollywood stereotypes, while presenting themselves in a positive light and showing how they actually made their living" (Prins 2002: 65). Initially, a consultation process with the community was engaged where three objectives for the film were outlined; documentation of Mi'Kmaq arts and crafts, strengthening of cultural identity through a collaborative, community filmmaking effort and to inform the public of the existence of the Mi'Kmaq while indirectly legitimating their struggle for native rights in Maine (Prins 2002).

Prins left the community after the film was made, but returned in 1999 to experience what he characterizes as 'a particular kind of culture shock'. Reportedly, the community had transformed itself from 'depressed and depressing' into a thriving,

successful centre. "With an annual budget of several million dollars, the Aroostook Mi'Kmaqs now run their own affairs from a new administration building located on recently purchased reservation land near Presque Isle" (2002: 67). Prins states that many families moved back to the area after a tribal medical clinic was built. Members of this community have also rekindled some of their long neglected Mi'Kmaq cultural practices. Prins' assertion that these successes are directly connected to the creation of a video may be a little grandiose. Surely, there had to have been other contributing factors to consider in the re-generation of this community that Prins has not discussed in his article. Nevertheless, the contributions of media production to cultural revival cannot be overlooked.

Anthropologist Terence Turner worked among Kayapo Indians of Brazil, beginning in the mid-1980s. The Kayapo received an introduction to cameras and tape recorders in the 1950s when anthropologists and journalists began entering their communities taking photographs, film and audio to show to the world outside (Turner 1991). By the late 1960s, the Kayapo acquired audio tape recorders of their own, which they used for two main purposes: to send taped communications between villages and to record and play back ritual performances (Turner 1991). Through media created by outsiders, the Kayapo quickly came to realize that their images and culture held value to people outside of their communities and could fetch a handsome profit if they chose to objectify themselves.

In 1988 Chief Payakan, spoke to Turner about "his idea for a comprehensive program of Kayapo cultural self-documentation through video" (Turner 1991: 70). Even

though there was enough interest in the community to support the kind of program Payakan spoke of, the initiative faced several challenges from its outset. The lack of an editing facility as well as a viable archive location provided the initiative with its share of challenges. In the late 1970s to early 1980s, Brazilian anthropologists and video producers had formed the *Mekaron Opoi Djoi* project, teaching interested Kayapo to use video cameras. In 1987, the research team began teaching Kayapo previously trained in camera work to edit video. Turner characterizes his own involvement in the project as unapologetically 'interventionist', stating that his ultimate intentions were to "create a new institutional focus for intercommunal communication and cooperation among the fourteen mutually autonomous Kayapo villages" (1991: 71). At the same time, Turner hoped to transfer a very complex skill set to the younger Kayapo, as well as introduce them to the larger world outside their communities in preparation of becoming future Kayapo leaders.

Besides the myriad of issues having to do with equipment, (lack there of, maintenance of, camera breakage and so on) personal rivalries erupted in varying degrees in several Kayapo communities. Turner states that village politics and personal relations meant there was little cooperation outside of obligatory kin relationships and village chiefs regarded one another as rivals. Also, as a direct result of these conditions, prestige became associated with possession of video equipment, thereby creating a situation where equipment distribution came to be seen as attributes of personal identity (1991). In the community of Mentuktire, for example, such rivalries ultimately resulted in a man and his wife leaving their community over a dispute with another filmmaker. Video production

in Mentuktire halted all together for some time after this incident.

The one community where efforts to train Kayapo were successful and progressed without event was Kubenkakare. Turner was invited to Kubenkakare by the community's most active chief to teach his son video making. Turner states that the boy's very young age, his lack of political standing or political ambition and the fact that he was the son of the dominant political leader could be attributed to the absence of his challengers (Turner 1991).

In the Canadian Arctic, anthropologists Michelle Daveluy and Christopher Fletcher worked in close collaboration with the community of Kangiqsuqjuaq, Nunavik to create the film *Trying not to lose / Anaulataq* about Inuit baseball. Daveluy and Fletcher were particularly interested in representing Inuit on their own terms and made a conscious effort to discuss topics relevant to the people with whom they worked (Daveluy 2002). For their part, Inuit participants voiced a desire to portray a positive aspect of Inuit life in the film (Daveluy 2002). In a presentation at the 2002 CASCA conference entitled *Visual justice, culture and power among the Inuit*, Dr. Daveluy spoke to several issues that presented themselves during the production of *Anaulataq* such as power and gender relations, issues pertaining to the availability of equipment and video tapes and issues that arose during the editing process.

The filmmaking efforts of Robert Flaherty have indeed endured in many corners of the Canadian Arctic. Although Allakariallak (the actor who played Flaherty's Nanook) died before he was able to pass on "…his knowledge of the camera and filmmaking directly to other Inuit, the unacknowledged help he gave Flaherty haunts

Inuit producers today as a paradigmatic moment in a history of unequal 'looking relations'" (Ginsburg 2002a: 39). No better manifestation of Allakariallak's filmmaking legacy can be seen than in the community of Igloolik, Nunavut, where filmmaking was born of a desire to film traditional aspects of Inuit culture.

Since its inception in 1988, Igloolik Isuma Productions Limited has been producing video by and for Inuit. Many of Isuma's staff received initial training from the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC), a northern counterpart of the CBC, Canada's national television network. It is widely known that television made its way to Canada's northern territories in order to provide entertainment and news for southern Canadians who had been sent to the Arctic to work. Due to the fact that there was less than one hour a week of programming in Inuktitut and even less programming that held any relevance to life in the north (Alia 1999), Inuit began to produce their own television programming. By taking control of media shown in Inuit communities, Inuit were combating the cultural genocide (Graburn1982) seen as inherent to the dominant use of English in addition to culturally irrelevant content of southern programming shown in northern communities (Alia 1999; Amirault 2001, 2004; Poisey 1999).

The community of Igloolik, Nunavut, in the late 1970s and early 1980s twice voted against the introduction of television into its homes for the reasons stated above (Amirault 2001; Valaskakis 1982). Today, however, Igloolik is the home of Igloolik Isuma Productions Limited, an internationally recognized film production company best known for producing the first Inuit feature length film, *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*.

Atanarjuat debuted to an Inuit audience in Iqaluit, Nunavut, December 2000 and

then to an international audience five months later. At the Cannes Film Festival, founding Isuma member Zacharias Kunuk won the *Camera d'Or* given to best first-time director. Filmed in Inuktitut (the Inuit language spoken in Igloolik) and then subtitled, Isuma's dramas depict life on the land in the1940s, before Inuit were forced by the Canadian government to settle permanent locales.

Photo 1-1: Zack Kunuk bringing home the Camera D'or, June 2001. Photo: Marni Amirault.

Activities such as travel from the sea ice to caribou hunting grounds inland, the construction of sod houses and igloos, as well as various methods of hunting figure prominently in Isuma's films. It is also important to note that Isuma actors are encouraged to employ an improvisational style in its films. "Women scrape and sew skins inside the sod house as children play. As they work, they tell stories about amusing adventures when they lived in camps. As in everyday life, storytellers are often interrupted by children calling for their attention" (Wachowich 2001: 160 – 170). Isuma has called the films that they create 'living histories', suggesting actors draw from real life situations or perhaps stories passed on to them by their Elders to shape the story that is being told.

This improvisational style Isuma employs, lends itself further to teaching young Inuit who may not be as knowledgeable about traditional Inuit activities. For example, while filming episode 10 of the Nunavut series, *Qaisut*, a polar bear wandered into the

camp where they were filming. "Kunuk grabbed his video-camera as others grabbed their rifles. The climax of the video-taped episode came when the men and dogs rushed off to protect the camp" (Wachowich 2001: 168 - 169). Through their participation in the films of Isuma, youth are not only learning the art of filmmaking from an Inuit perspective, they also learn skills that are vastly important to life out on the land, sewing techniques, and other aspects of traditional Inuit culture that they may not have otherwise had access to in town.

In addition to the films of Isuma, the production company has assisted in the creation of two filmmaking workshops. The Tarriaksuk Women's Workshop, was created by Marie-Hélèn Cousineau upon the realization that Isuma's films possessed, by and large, a male perspective and that female traditional activities needed to be documented as well (Flemming 1996). The Inuusiq (Life) workshop was a year-long video project involving members of a pre-existing youth group in Igloolik. Fifteen youth were asked by members of Isuma and Tarriagsuk to provide an outline for a video about suicide in exchange for training in filmmaking (Rodrigue 1999). The issue of suicide had directly touched many people in Igloolik. It was hoped that by initiating discussion within the community, other senseless deaths could be avoided (Amirault 2001). This self-representation through media is not only tied to cultural preservation, but to the projection of Inuit into the future.

Another filmmaking initiative involving Inuit youth, comes out of Iqaluit where several young Inuit who frequented a drop-in center run by the Qikitani Inuit Association (QIA) were invited to participate in a filmmaking workshop in the summer 2003. QIA's

Director of Social Policy, Mr. John MacDougall states "most of the youth who would eventually become involved in the project had either done poorly in school or dropped out altogether, and were, at the time of the project, unemployed" (Amirault 2004). However, as the workshop progressed, MacDougall stated that the youth became more involved in the project, noting that "their interest, dedication and development were readily apparent throughout the course of the workshops" (Amirault 2004). It is interesting to note that the youth in Iqaluit chose for themselves to create a film that discussed the issue of suicide.

As the above cases illustrate,

> The mediations created by the work - from reverse ethnographies, to archives of elders' stories to the connecting of indigenous communities across time and space through networks such as TVNC [Television Northern Canada] or the Tanami Network - are valued as much as the media productions themselves. The work is important and of considerable interest in its own right, but also in a paradigmatic sense, by demonstrating the ways in which media are reconfigured in different cultural contexts (Ginsburg 1998: 190 - 191).

Drawing from Ginsburg, I hope to contribute to literature that can further illuminate the issues mentioned above through a discussion of the PGMES Oral History Video Project. I will pay attention to social and production process, examining as well, the potential for filmmaking to become a tool for community building. I will investigate the effort of collaboration between an aboriginal community and a 'research community' to discuss how power relationships were negotiated and structured in the filmmaking process. I will also investigate the notion of filmmaking as a potential tool for transfer of skills and as a potential generator of cross-cultural and cross-generational dialogue.

Issues pertaining to control of images and information will be brought to light as well.

Chapter II

The community of Prince George: a brief history

Present day Prince George is nestled in a naturally occurring 'topographic bowl' at the confluence of the Fraser and Nechako River systems in the interior of British Columbia. Approximately 780 kilometres north of Vancouver, on Highway 97, Prince George is known to many as 'B.C.'s Northern Capital'. The buildings that line the downtown streets of this community reflect a wealth of history; gold rush era store fronts that house many Prince George businesses mingle with modern-day constructions. Three pulp mills are situated across the Nechako River, churning a thick, grey, acrid smoke into the air against the dusty backdrop of an eroding river's hillside-edge. These mills and their support industries have been in operation since the 1960s and are responsible for bringing many people to the community. The University of Northern British Columbia is also responsible for a more recent population influx as hundreds of students work their way from entry level courses to graduation.

Long before pulp mills and universities, however, this area was home to people of the Dene First Nation. Four main tribes; the Sekanais, Babines, Chilcotins and Carrier Indians; are said to have inhabited the area (Runnalls 1946). "Europeans (in the person of Alexander Mackenzie) passed by for the first time in 1793" (Evans et al 2005: 11). In 1807, Simon Fraser, representative of The Northwest Company, erected a fur trading post on the Fraser River and called it 'Fort George', after King George III of England (Elliot 1978) the initial stages in the creation of present day Prince George.

A significant portion of the Prince George population today identify as "Métis".

Derived from the beneficial alliances and marriages formed between the European fur traders and the First Nations peoples they met in the New World are the Métis. The question of who the Métis are is a very complex one to answer. For this reason, I include a very brief discussion, drawing from literature gathered at the Métis National Conference, 2004 which I attended in the hopes of alleviating some confusion as well as outlining a rough definition of the Métis.

Métis Definition

The main focus of discussion during The Métis National Conference 2004; both officially and unofficially; was the definition of Métis. September 19, 2003, the Métis community in Canada won an important victory in the Powley Decision. The Powleys, members of a Sault Ste. Marie Métis community, were charged under sections 46 and 47 of Ontario's *Game and Fish Act* with "…unlawfully hunting an adult bull moose without a hunting license and with knowingly possessing game hunted in contravention of that statute" (http://www.aand.gov.ab.ca/PDFs/R%20v.20%Powley.pdf retrieved March 07, 2005 from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development web site). The Powleys argued for their right to hunt in the Sault Ste. Marie area via the inclusion of Métis in Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution and won.

Jean Teillet, former treasurer and Vice-President of the Indigenous Bar Association of Canada, discusses the issue, stating:

> The unfortunate reality in the early 21st Century, is that the term 'Métis' has become confusing to everyone. There are several reasons for the confusion. The first is because the term 'Métis' is often used to describe two distinct groups of people. It is used to refer to all individuals who have mixed Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal ancestry (sometimes

> called 'Métis' or small 'm' métis). It is also used to those who belong to the Aboriginal people generally associated with the historic Métis Nation located in central, north western Canada (2003: 3).

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the term Métis came to replace the widely used term 'half-breed' due to a more sensitized public awareness (Telliet 2003). This led to the term 'Métis' being widely adopted to refer to all people with mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry. To complicate matters further, is the confusion regarding the close relationship between Indians and the Métis, which Telliet states is a direct result of the continuous change to the term "Indian" in the Indian Act (2003).

In 1982, Parliament confirmed the existence of the Métis in Canada, offering constitutional protection to their Aboriginal rights by including the Métis as one of the 'Aboriginal peoples of Canada' under section 35 of the Canadian Constitution. Subsequent interpretation of the section by the Supreme Court gave the Métis recognition of being a distinct culture. Telliet states,

> The term 'Métis' under s. 35, does not encompass all individuals with mixed Indian and European heritage; rather, it refers to distinctive peoples who, in addition to their mixed ancestry, developed their own customs, way of life and recognizable group identity separate from their Indian or Inuit and European Forbears (2003: 5).

In light of the definition under section 35, it was seen by the Métis that a more concrete definition was required to determine community membership.

At the Métis National Council's (MNC) 18th Annual General Assembly, held in Edmonton Alberta, September 27th - 28th, 2003, a new definition of the term Métis was finally arrived at. The Métis Nation website states the following:

> 1 "Métis" means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis National ancestry, and is accepted by the Métis Nation.
>
> Defined Terms in National Definition of Métis
>
> 1.2 "Historic Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people then known as Métis or Half-breeds who resided in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland
>
> 1.3 "Historic Métis Nation Homeland" means the area of land in west central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-breeds as they were then known.
>
> 1.4 "Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people descended from the Historic Métis Nation which is now comprised of all Métis Nation citizens and is one of the "aboriginal peoples of Canada" within the meaning of s.35 of the Constitution Act 1982.
>
> 1.5 "Distinct from other Aboriginal peoples" means distinct for cultural and nationhood purposes.
>
> For the record, Mentis (sic) do not claim to be a "Tribe", nor are our people listed under the Indian Act. We are a distinct Nation of Aboriginal people whose ancestry, as Mentis (sic), stems from historic Mentis (sic) communities which arose along the waterways of Ontario and through the routes of the fur trades in west central North America. We have our own language, culture, traditions, values and way of life. We are not attempting to be registered as "Indians" under the Indian Act and we do not want to take away from First Nations. We are a proud Aboriginal Nation who have our own vision for Mentis (sic) governance (http://groups.msn.com/MetisNation/mncmtisnationalcouncil.msnw retrieved March 21, 2004).

While attending the Métis National Conference 2004, it became readily apparent that the definition of Métis is still under much contestation within the Métis community. Questions pertaining to the inclusion and exclusion of individuals to the Métis Nation were at the forefront of such debates.

The Prince George Métis Elders Society (PGMES)

While the definition of Métis is a subject of national concern, 'Métis-ness' is also played out in many local and regional organizations throughout the country. The legal contexts of constitutional matters are in many instances quite distant from everyday lived contexts of Métis history and identity as will become clear in the following section of the thesis which discusses operations at the Prince George Métis Elders Society (PGMES).

Founded January, 1993, the PGMES is an informal, not for profit society that provides members with a number of services and programs "in order to improve the quality of our lives and the lives of the people in our community" (Evans et al 1999: ix). The PGMES office can be found at the Prince George Native Friendship Center, 1600, Third Street in Prince George, British Columbia. Membership in the PGMES is open to individuals in the city of Prince George who are fifty years or older and who live within a thirty mile radius of the city.

When the PGMES first opened its doors, it was because

> ... the Elders had no place to go. There was actually no place for them to meet, or talk or what ever. So we stated that we were going to start one up, and we had a meeting, and we elected a president, vice-president, secretary and board of directors, and it just went from there. We just met and then we ... I don't know how we found all the Elders. Word of mouth, things get around so fast and the first meeting we had, we had fifteen. And then they kept coming and coming and coming (Mrs. Margaret Jaffray in Evans et al: 1999: 143).

One of the key functions of the PGMES is to offer the opportunity for socialization to Elders in the Prince George vicinity.

A large part of Métis culture involves assisting family and community members when in need. In order to fulfill this role, PGMES members feel it is their duty to visit

those persons who are lonely, ill, bereaved, isolated, or otherwise shut-in. The organization also incorporates visiting into the list of activities and services offered to PGMES members. The organization also offers a small monetary stipend to those who have lost loved ones and seek assistance with funeral expenses. Additional support is given to those Elders needing to subsidize their cost of living or other incidentals.

Another goal of the PGMES is to help younger generations learn about and understand their Métis heritage. Mrs. Margaret Jaffray, past PGMES president and present day active member states:

> Our objectives in forming the Elders Society were to enrich our community by encouraging Cree language education, cultural heritage events and programs, and the collection of our history in the form of videos, collection of language materials and storytelling. We sponsor and organize group gathering, social events, and Health and Wellness Workshops (traditional medicine and nutritional training)" (in Evans et al1999: ix).

Members of the PGMES accomplish this part of their mandate through visits to schools and centers in the community of Prince George, as well as throughout the province of British Columbia.

The PGMES maintains a plot in the Queensway Community Garden on Queensway Street, in Prince George. Members who are willing and able are invited to spend time watering and weeding as needed. Some crops planted included beans, lettuce, broccoli, carrots, and cauliflower. During my time with the PGMES, there was one Elder who assumed primary care of the garden, though everyone was encouraged to assist in the gardening duties. Produce harvested from this garden is shared with all PGMES members in an effort to provide nutrition for Elders as well as subsidize their income at

harvest time. As another means of dietary supplement, the PGMES states that they take members berry picking during berry season and fishing in the spring, fall and summer.

Craft Day is held on a weekly basis. For this event, Elders share their knowledge and skills with one another as well as other community members in attendance. During my time with the PGMES, I had the opportunity to join many craft days. Two Elders who faithfully attended every week; Mrs. Irene Cardinal and Mrs. Florence Aubichon, stated that in recent times, interest in Craft Day had dwindled. For many Elders, transportation to and from the office is difficult. Some Elders made crafts at home and brought them to the office when in the vicinity. At the PGMES office, items such as beaded key chains, dream catchers, dolls, as well as leather work and beaded jewellery can be found. Crafts are sold at community functions or can be purchased directly from the PGMES office. All craft sales raise funds for the organization.

As mentioned above, one of the important services offered by the PGMES is the opportunity for Elders to socialize. During my time in Prince George, it was impressed upon me, again and again, that people do not visit like they did in the past. One Elder discussed the importance of visiting to Métis, explaining how before moving to Prince George, she would get up at five in the morning on the first of January to cook a turkey in anticipation of the number of people she was sure would arrive at her door in celebration of the new year. She said she was surprised and disappointed when very few people visited her home her first New Years' day in Prince George.

Bill and Georgina Regan are PGMES members who moved to Prince George in the early 1970s. Mrs. Regan remembers Prince George at this time as "…more lively ... You seen more people. People were more friendly. They'd come and visit us. Oh, you

know, even [if] we're strange people that moved in, but they'd hear about us and ... and it didn't take long, we picked up a lot of friends. They used to come and visit us" (Georgina Regan as cited in Evans et al: 1999: 38[1]). Mr. Regan similarly states that he feels that Prince George has "... grown up a lot and its more violent now" (Bill Regan as cited in Evans et al: 1999: 38). Mrs. Regan adds that she thinks the increased violence is probably "... why people they stay in more now. They're scared to go out there. It's not everyday that we have company. No, not everyday. No not now, but at that time, they used to stop for coffee or whatever and a little chit chat" (Georgina Regan as cited in Evans et al: 1999: 38).

To assist the Elders in fulfilling their social needs, members gather at one of the large meeting rooms in the Friendship Centre every other Saturday for a pot luck luncheon. On some occasions, this event is held in conjunction with other PGMES activities, such as meetings. One Elder during a preliminary project meeting stated that she felt that the one event that kept members active and interested in the PGMES was the potluck luncheons the organization hosts. Another activity one can count on to encourage members to return to the Friendship Center, is the guaranteed game of Bingo called once the meal is finished and the hall is cleared of dishes and debris. The other regularly scheduled gaming activity during autumn, winter and springtime months, is the cribbage tournament held on a bi-monthly basis.

PGMES Office

I worked in the PGMES office as a volunteer. I regard my inclusion in office operation as invaluable to my research experience. Often times, I was the only person

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[1] When *What it is to be a Métis* was published, Mr. and Mrs. Regan were not yet married and so Mrs. Regan appears in the text as Georgina Collins.

present in the office, which meant that I naturally assumed the role of office administrator, fielding telephone calls, faxes and drop-in-visitors. The PGMES had, in the past, hired a full-time office administrator, but funding had run out in March, long before I arrived. Chronic under-funding, a situation faced by many not for profit and charitable organizations, meant there were no monies available to fill this desperately needed role.

For many Elders holding executive membership at the PGMES, 'the office' is an unfamiliar environment. Through conversations with the Elders, I was reminded time and again, that for most of their lives, these women and men had been employed as labourers. Regardless, the PGMES is a very productive and successful organization. The Elders who have put their time and effort into office operations have faced considerable challenges, but have nevertheless risen to occasion time and time again. Through their efforts, the PGMES has offered many vital services and opportunities to their membership, and the community of Prince George at large.

In *What it is to be a Métis,* Mrs. Florence Aubichon, past PGMES treasurer is asked, "When you were raising your family, did you have to work to raise your children". In response to this question Mrs. Aubichon states, "No. I stayed home. I never worked until 1972. Then I got a janitorial job at the Oxford Building downtown. I worked there for 15 years" (Mrs. Florence Aubichon in Evans et al, 1999: 95). Similarly, active PGMES member Emile Nome held several positions as a janitor, logger and in a saw mill while his wife, Betty, found employment as a cook, tree planter, a worker in a glass shop and as a janitor while they were establishing themselves and raising their family (Evans et al, 1999).

Bill Regan held a post in the military during the Second World War. Before that, he had worked as a 'slab monkey' in a saw mill in Green Lake, Saskatchewan. After the war, Mr. Regan worked for the Department of Natural Resources as a tower man, for the Northern Transportation Company where he loaded barges on the Mackenzie River for yarding (Evans at al: 1999). He also tried his hand at mining for two years in the Northwest Territories. His wife, Georgina Regan states that she can remember when she was "... working for $12 a month ... On the farms. Not easy work, I tell you. ... I wasn't getting as much as a man would, but then, you know, I was a girl, so ..." (Georgina Regan in Evans et al; 1999: 35). Mrs. Regan also worked at a hotel in Hay River, Northwest Territories for eight years.

Some members of the PGMES, however, *have* worked in offices, holding positions in other not for profit organizations as well as various business and government organizations. Past PGMES president, Margaret Jaffray states that she came to politics "[w]ay back in my first marriage. George Ho Lem was an Alderman, MLA all those things in Calgary. Business man, that's what I mean, it wasn't my way of life. And I had to get into politics, and I couldn't. Their lifestyle is all together different" (Margaret Jaffray in Evans at al: 1999: 142). Mrs. Jaffray joined the Friendship Centre upon her arrival to Prince George and was also instrumental in the creation of several not for profit organizations in the Prince George area, including the United Native Nation (UNN) in 1974 / 75 and, in later years, the PGMES.

Another active PGMES member, Mrs. Rose Bortolon is an accomplished business woman, having owned and operated her own catering business in the past. Mrs. Bortolon also holds the position of Director Region 5, North Central on the Métis Provincial

council of British Columbia. During my time with the PGMES, it became increasingly apparent that the Elders, and the PGMES board of directors, rely heavily on Mrs. Bortolon's skills in their organization. Many times, decisions that needed to be made were postponed until she was there to make them. On several occasions; as the Elders became familiar with me; this reliance was shifted, somewhat minimally, from Mrs. Bortolon to myself. Mrs. Bortolon is the person to whom the idea for the PGMES Oral History Video Project can be attributed.

The most important task I was assigned during my field term with the PGMES was to write a grant application for a Bingo license that had been revoked by the BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch the year previous, due to the low number of volunteer hours reported by the PGMES as well as the fact that they were seen by the BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch to have had 'too much money' in their gaming bank account (Fieldnotes, June 2004). The writing of this application was my introduction to a summer of Bingo and Bingo-related events and tasks.

Bingo and Games of Chance

Huey: Should I call you 'Old Man' or 'Mr. Mountain'?
Radio Announcer: Either one, I guess … just don't call me late for Bingo!
(Hank Williams First Nation, 2005).

One thing that struck me during the time I spent with the Métis community was the level of involvement most people had in gaming and games of chance. It was also surprising to see how many types of Bingo were being played, not to mention how many other games of chance there were, such as silent auctions, raffles and pull tabs. During PGMES road trips, I came to notice that where ever lottery sales were available, many Elders regularly purchased scratch and lottery tickets. Games of chance are important

features of everyday life. In participating in them, and discussions among people, it became clear that gaming is a community activity, and not mere individual distraction.

Many initial studies on Native gaming were products of their time, viewing gaming through a European lens, which by and large, characterized gambling as corrupt. Players are seen to be prone to pathological addiction, unable to gain control over the length of their participation, the amount of money spent, and so on. Gaming is also seen, by Euro-Americans as being largely immoral (Pasquarettta 2003; Darian-Smith 2004). One of the first texts to examine Native gaming practices drawing on a Native perspective was written by Stewart Culin in 1907. Culin's eight hundred and eighty-four page text discusses two hundred and twenty-nine Native groups in North America and Mexico and identifies thirty-six types of games, which Culin then divided into the categories of games of skill and dexterity and games of chance (Pasquaretta 2003).

Most important for our purposes here, Culin concluded his fourteen year study with a discussion that illuminated several important points about gaming in Native communities. To begin, gaming practices of the North American Native were derived from "...ceremonial observances of a religious character, and also have a foundation in myth" (Culin 1975: 809). Further, Culin states that while games were played for entertainment purposes, they were also often played at religious ceremonies, "as rites pleasing to the gods to secure their favour, or as processes of sympathetic magic, to drive away sickness, avert other evil, or produce rain and the fertilization and reproduction of plants and animals, or other beneficial results" (Culin, 1975: 809). Culin speaks to the near universal nature of the games he witnessed, claiming to have seen many of them played on other continents. Furthermore, these contests were almost exclusively

divinatory in nature. Games of chance seem to be driven by questions of relationships between players and unseen forces, rather than secular and western notions of randomness, probability and chance.

In her ethnography, *The Hands Feel it: Healing and Spirit Presences among a Northern Alaskan People,* anthropologist Edith Turner discusses the Upiat village where she worked and where Bingo was played often. By Turner's estimation, games of chance were closely tied to hunting activities, an event she characterizes as being grounded in randomness. "Basically, the arrival of a particular whale was a random event, from the perspective of the world of cause and effect. The randomness affecting a hunter ... therefore keyed him into a different world from ours - different in time, too, since the random play of events in a hunter's life created 'hunting time'" (Turner 1996: 168). For Turner, then, the randomness of hunting had manifestations in the modern events and practices she witnessed in the community. In her conclusions, she states that "...randomness came to be celebrated, connected with the undifferentiated generosity of nature, the hunter's life and also divination ..." (1996: 226). Further, "[t]he craze for bingo, the gamble, was a modern substitute for this environment of the random" (1996: 168).

Photo 2-1: Elders playing Bingo at the Cottonwood Music Festival. July 2004; Fort Saint James, British Columbia. Photo: Marni Amirault

Bingo can be played anywhere by the PGMES Elders since the cards have plastic sliding doors which hide the numbers and so the cards can be used repeatedly. The most common style played by the PGMES, involved a Bingo caller reading out the numbers as they were produced by a Bingo machine. This style of Bingo was often played after the pot lucks held at the Friendship centre. While in transit, on our trip to Lac Ste. Anne, I was asked to call Bingo for the Elders on the PGMES bus, using a portable electronic Bingo caller. For the most part, Bingo was played to alleviate the boredom that a long day on the road brings. Additionally, not long after our arrival at the Cotton Wood Bluegrass Music Festival, another group of Métis joined the Elders for a game around the picnic table. Some Elders also frequented Bingo parlours in Prince George, and during the one free day during our trip to Lac Ste. Anne, many Elders and members of the research team tried their luck in the Bingo parlour at the West Edmonton Mall.

In addition to regular Bingo, were two other varieties of the game; Chicken Bingo and Indian Bingo. 'Chicken Bingo" was played at the Cotton Wood Music Festival. Upon arrival, children were walking around with a large piece of paper divided into numbered squares. Individuals were asked to select their number by writing their name in a square. Later in the afternoon, at a set time, people congregated around a pen into which a live chicken was placed. The pen had a piece of paper set on the floor with a numerical grid on it, like the one the children had circulated earlier in the day. The chicken was given some feed and then players waited, often coaxing the foul around the cage, hoping it would defecate on the number they chose, declaring them the winner.

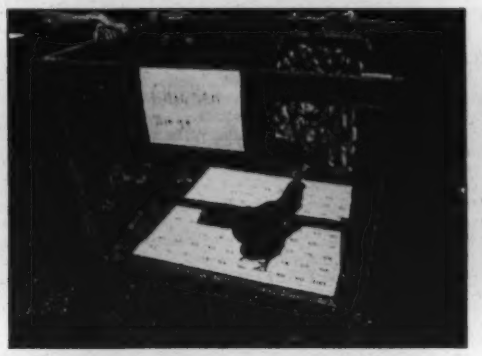


Photo 2-2: Chicken Bingo at Cottonwood Music Festival. July 2004; Fort Saint James, British Columbia. Photo: Marni Amirault.

Photo 2-3: Filming Indian Bingo at Wilkins Park. September 2004. Prince George, British Columbia. Photo: Mike Evans.

another style of Bingo referred to by the Elders as "Indian Bingo". This game was played during the Métis Culture Workshop at Wilkins' Park and involved players of all ages (many of the Elders held their grandchildren on their laps, coaching them in game rules). All participants sat around a table, in the center of which sat several wrapped gifts. The first player cast a set of large wooden die in the center of the table. If doubles were thrown, the player chose one of the gifts, if not, the die were passed to the next player to his or her right. The game was timed; each 'round' lasting two minutes which meant that the movement was fast paced. When another player cast doubles, they were given the choice of taking a package from the center of the table, or from another player. Indian Bingo invokes Turner's ideas of randomness, teaching players that things can be lost as quickly as they are gained.

During a Métis culture workshop with the Nechako Fraser Elders, Bingo was not played. Instead, other forms of gaming were engaged. Most notably, workshop participants were invited to play a traditional hand game called LaHaye. This guessing

game was traditionally played by First Nations in British Columbia at gatherings and feasts, sometimes to settle disputes, such as rites to fishing or hunting grounds, for example and could last several days.

Photo 2-4: Participants playing LaHaye at the Nechako-Fraser workshop. March 2004, Prince George, British Columbia. Photo: Mike Evans

Other gaming activities during the Nechako Fraser Elders workshop included a silent auction, a cake walk played like musical chairs where cakes are won with each turn. Raffle tickets were sold on three pieces of Métis art and a silent auction was held. A craft table was set up by the door. Near the front of the hall, a station was also set up where one could purchase pull tabs for CDN$0.25 a piece.

As discussed above, consideration of the role that gaming takes in Aboriginal cultures is important. As Darian-Smith states,

> [f]or Native American communities, the lessons learned from such behaviour inform complex traditions and myths. Instead of thinking that the state or church should control such gambling behaviour, as the dominant non-Indian population claims, for many Native Americans the lessons learned from winning and losing, which often involve the overcoming of temptation and adversity are regarded as an important part of personal growth and community experience. These lessons are passed down through myths and stories from generation to generations. In other words, many present-day Native Americans have a very different relationship to gambling than that experienced by the general population (2004: 58).

Although I was not told any myths pertaining to gaming or Bingo, I did hear many discussions pertaining to luck and reciprocity. At the Cottonwood Bluegrass

Festival, for example, when one of the Elders won at Chicken Bingo, I was told that she won because she always shared her winnings. That evening, she bought a round of hamburgers for the entire group with the money that she had won. In the game of 'Indian Bingo' some of the points made by Darian-Smith in the above quotation were brought to light as this game held a few obvious life lessons that were taught and learned by all. Be kind to fellow players, because the tables can turn quickly and you may be in need of friends at some point down the road. What you hold in your possession can be quickly taken from you. It also taught the value of thinking quick on one's feet, as the time limit placed on players necessitated. Edith Turner's notions of the random nature of the universe can also be seen here.

Road Trips and Pilgrimages

Another service the PGMES offers its membership is the opportunity for travel. During summer months, PGMES Elders attend numerous events in British Columbia and beyond. During the summer of 2004, the Elders made two pilgrimages to religious sites and also attended a bluegrass music festival. Transportation and lodging come to PGMES members free of charge, with the exception of trips that are a fair distance from Prince George, and for a longer period of time. For example, a nominal fee of fifty dollars is required for the annual pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne, just outside of Edmonton, Alberta. This journey lasted four days altogether and required more than one night's lodging. The PGMES has recently purchased a bus that provides transportation for the Elders when needed. This purchase was made to alleviate some of the costs travelling incurs. Sometimes the PGMES bus is also used for Elders' transportation to and from events in town.

During the road trips I participated in, conversations with Elders provided insight into the importance of these excursions as both a social event and a get away. One Elder, for example, had lost her husband a year or so previous and was living with her daughter's family. She told me that the trip to Lac Ste. Anne was the first trip she had taken since her husband had passed, and that it was important for her to go because she had been feeling lonely and depressed. Traveling with the Elders to Lac Ste. Anne had helped ease her loss and had given her an opportunity to see new sights.

Another thing that became apparent during PGMES outings was that for many Elders, these trips meant the possibility of chance encounters with friends and family who hadn't seen one another in some time. The pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne was the event that caused the most excitement in this regard. One PGMES Elder for example, was joined by her sister in Edmonton in order that they could attend the event together, and many others ran into friends and relatives at some of the rest stops along the way. Many Elders lamented that there had been more surprise meetings at the Pilgrimage in years past. Mrs. Jaffray expressed her disappointment and sadness as we were getting on the bus to return to the hotel. She told me that many of her Elders are gone. There was a palpable sense of loss in this regard among other Elders as well. Annual events such as the Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage are charged with emotion as time moves forward, bringing much change to the community.

The Prince George Métis Elders' Society plays an important role in the lives of many Métis living in the Prince George area. The PGMES mandate to educate people inside and outside of the community about past and present Métis culture is an invaluable resource for the community of Prince George at large. Visits to schools, summer camps,

as well as providing opening prayers at meetings and other events are just some of the contributions made by PGMES Elders. In return, the PGMES offers its members occasions for socializing and travel as well as an opportunity to make significant contributions to the community in which Elders live. Events and activities, such as those discussed through out this chapter should be seen as contributions to community building in Prince George.

Chapter III

The Prince George Métis Elders Society Oral History Video Project

This chapter aims to outline the PGMES Oral History Video Project, highlighting its genesis, the participants and their roles as well as the goals for the initiative as set out by individual actors. The idea for the PGMES Oral History Video Project came from PGMES member, Mrs. Rose Bortolon who approached Dr. Mike Evans to facilitate the project. The PGMES has held a long term relationship with Dr. Evans, a Canada Research Chair currently at UBC Okanagan in the Community, Culture and Global Studies Unit. Previous projects between Dr. Evans and the PGMES involved the creation of two books; *What it is to be a Métis* (1999) and *The Brief History of the Short Life of the Island Cache* (2004). Both of these publications discuss aspects of history for Métis living in the Prince George region. Also, a participatory research model was employed in order to collect and archive the information gained. In 2004, the PGMES approached Dr. Evans in the hopes that he would assist the organization with a similar project, this time the primary medium would be video.

Project participants can be broken into two groups; the PGMES and the 'research team'. For their part, involvement from PGMES members is on a self-selected basis. The most permanent members of the research team consisted of Dr. Evans and Mr. Stephen Foster, the project's professional filmmaker and film director. There were, however, other academic staff members and students who became involved as members of the research team; myself included. In total, there have been people from three academic institutions involved; The Okanogan University College, The University of Northern British Columbia, and The University of Alberta. It should also be noted that for the

duration of the project, membership in both groups has fluctuated as time constraints and other factors require.

The project's goals; as outlined by the PGMES and following the organization's mandate of public education; was to create a visual document that would be made available to a wide audience. More specifically, the Elders wanted to be able to provide their grandchildren with a video that showed them important aspects of Métis culture. A preliminary meeting was held in Prince George in January 2004. The goals of this meeting were twofold. First, consensus had to be generated among all those present that the PGMES Oral History video project was to go ahead. Second, participants were asked to unearth specific activities and events that would come to compose the basis of the video. Some of these ideas included jigging, (a dance practiced by Métis) and holding a cultural workshop in order to teach youth how to make birch syrup and bannock, for example, or to take them berry picking, and teach them to tie rabbit snares and so on.

The goals of the research team were multi-facetted. First and foremost, was the desire to assist Elders in the creation of a video that meets their goals and satisfaction. Of note is the fact that the project was funded through a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Fine Arts Creation grant. In keeping with this grant, there are several products the PGMES video project is committed to producing. The main goal of the PGMES Oral History Video project is to produce a broadcast quality video, which will be shown through the film festival circuit. Another proposed venue for this film is APTN. In addition to the film, an interactive CD rom pertaining to the PGMES, as well as a web-based version of CD rom material will be set up, enabling people to add content as they see fit. At this stage, the proposed web site will be engineered with passwords,

making the site available only to certain people.

The Events

The first formal event of this initiative took shape in the form of a meeting between the PGMES and the research team on Friday, January 23 2004. Following this meeting, a list serve was set up in order to facilitate communication between all project participants. Working between two provinces and three separate communities, a list serve was a good idea. That said, however, the list serve saw an initial burst of communication, then the tool quickly fell out of use. Another important idea that presented itself during this meeting was that Dr. Evans should send a video camera to the PGMES for the Elders to use as they saw fit.

The research team was invited to return to Prince George on the weekend of March 20 – 21, 2004 by the Nechako- Fraser Junction Elders Society, another Métis Elders group recently splintered from the PGMES. The Nechako-Fraser Elders had taken a portion of PGMES membership with them when they formed their own organization. As will become clear, this split fostered some feelings of resentment among the PGMES; that said, however, there were several PGMES members I had met in January who participated in the Nechako Frazer culture workshop. One individual also holds positions on both Elders' group's boards.

Workshops during the Nechako-Fraser weekend included a Cree language workshop and the building of a 'Jiggy Man'; a wooden man whose leg joints were put together with pegs so it could dance a jig on a wooden platform. There were also workshops for beading, playing the spoons, rug hooking, and rug braiding. A special room was set aside for younger participants where they could hear stories told or read to

them. One workshop specifically targeting children was conducted in this room, teaching how to make a Red River cart out of Popsicle sticks. Other events included a breakfast hosted by the Nechako Fraser Junction Elders, a stew and bannock contest and a fashion show.

Métis Days, June 17, 2004 brought the PGMES and the Nechako Fraser Junction Elder's Society together for the one and only time I was in Prince George. This event allowed my re-introduction to members of the PGMES, many of whom I had not interacted with since the meeting in January, six months previous. Held at Fort George Park in Prince George, Métis Days was a family affair, with a stage set up for performances and speeches. There were also many craft tables, as well as food and drink stalls. With two events held on the same day, Métis Days was in direct competition with a weekend long powwow, held at a nearby park in Prince George.

It had been decided that the main 'event' of my field work, other than working at the PGMES office would be accompanying the Elders on their Pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne. However, late one Friday afternoon while I was working at the PGMES office the phone rang. Mrs. Aubichon was calling to inform me that I would be picked up at 8:00 the following morning. "Where am I going?" I asked. "To Rose Prince" she replied, as though the answer to the question was obvious. This was how I learned that my name had not only been included in the Lac Ste. Anne trip, but had been added to all excursions the PGMES had scheduled for the Elders during my field term.

The first outing of the season was to the Rose Prince Pilgrimage held on Fraser Lake, British Columbia the weekend of July 9th – 11th. Every year, since 1954, people have gathered near the shores of Fraser Lake to honour the life of Rose Prince, Carrier

Indian Nun. Prince, born August 21, 1915, was the third oldest in the line of nine children. Sometime during 1922, Rose and her siblings were sent to a new residential school at Lejac, British Columbia where Rose studied, worked and became a nun. Here she would remain until her death, brought on by tuberculosis on August 19, 1949. Rose Prince's elevation to Sainthood occurred when her pine coffin was accidentally opened during the relocation of her grave in 1951. "Her body looked fresh. She looked as though she was sleeping. There were no marks on her face even after two years. Only the bouquet of flowers that we had put in her arms two years earlier had withered," noted Sister Elanor Klusa (Information sheet at Rose Prince gravesite- anon).

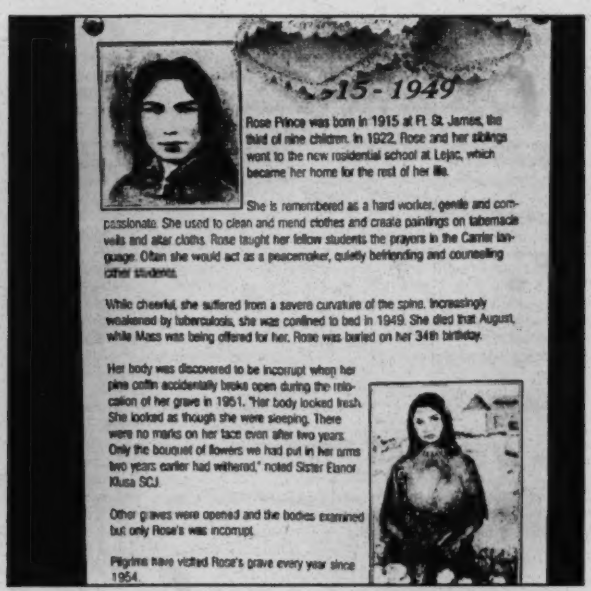

15 - 1949
Rose Prince was born in 1915 at Ft. St. James, the third of nine children. In 1922, Rose and her siblings went to the new residential school at Lejac, which became her home for the rest of her life.
She is remembered as a hard worker, gentle and compassionate. She used to clean and mend clothes and create paintings on tabernacle veils and altar cloths. Rose taught her fellow students the prayers in the Carrier language. Often she would act as a peacemaker, quietly befriending and counselling other students.
While cheerful, she suffered from a severe curvature of the spine. Increasingly weakened by tuberculosis, she was confined to bed in 1949. She died that August, while Mass was being offered for her. Rose was buried on her 34th birthday.
Her body was discovered to be incorrupt when her pine coffin accidentally broke open during the relocation of her grave in 1951. "Her body looked fresh. She looked as though she were sleeping. There were no marks on her face even after two years. Only the bouquet of flowers we had put in her arms two years earlier had withered," noted Sister Elanor Klusa SCJ.
Other graves were opened and the bodies examined but only Rose's was incorrupt.
Pilgrims have visited Rose's grave every year since 1954.

Photo 3-1: Pamphlet at Rose Prince Grave Site. July 2004, Fort St. James, British Columbia. Photo: Marni Amirault

The following weekend, July 17 - 18, the Elders and I attended the Cottonwood Music Festival; a bluegrass music festival held annually at Cottonwood Park on Stuart Lake, Fort St. James, British Columbia. The Elders were treated to one night's accommodation at a hotel on the Nak'azdli First Nations reserve, adjacent to the community of Fort St. James. Fort St. James holds significance for many Elders who had either lived there, or visited relatives there in their childhood. My involvement in the PGMES Oral History Video Project ended with the Wilkins Park workshop, September, 2004.

As time went on, it became clear that all of my experiences with the PGMES; from working in the office to calling Bingo on the bus on the way to Lac Ste. Anne; would be integral to the discussion at hand. It is for this reason that I have chosen to discuss not only Lac Ste. Anne, but all experiences with the PGMES.

Recording Events on Video

I chose to view the invitations to Rose Prince and the Cottonwood Music Festival as opportunities to practice video recording with the Elders as we attended events and as a chance to experience a PGMES road trip. As the Elders became familiar with my presence, they also came to expect to find me on the bus, or in the office, as the case may be. For my part, I was able to experiment with the video equipment, filming at public events as well as working out the best ways to communicate my needs and desires to the Elders. For example, it had been my plan to introduce myself to the Elders as a group at the beginning of each trip to inform those who didn't know me, stating who I was and why I was there. The Rose Prince Pilgrimage was my first trip on the PGMES bus so I was surprised when, as soon as the bus was parked, the Elders very quickly disembarked and dispersed. For the Cottonwood music festival, our second excursion, I was able to circumvent their rapid departure by asking for their attention before the bus came to a full stop.

For each trip we took, I brought the PGMES' digital camera, the video camera loaned to the PGMES by Dr. Evans as well as my own 35 mm instamatic camera, and the Sony digital video camera provided by the project. With all of the equipment on hand, I hoped to be able to interest Elders in recording their own images, one of the goals for the project generated by the meeting held in January. The April 2004 OUC Ethics

application written by Dr. Evans and Mr. Foster also discusses the desire to place "… cameras (still and video) into the hands of the participants (perhaps both Elders and other people) so that they [PGMES members] may choose what to record". To facilitate this end, I made sure the Elders knew that I had the equipment with me and that if the desire came over them to record anything, I would be carrying the cameras with me. I also explained to the Elders that if they wanted, they could direct me to take photos or video on their behalf.

For the duration of my personal involvement in the PGMES video project, the Elders did not choose to record their own images. The research team had hoped that this goal might be accomplished through the involvement of the Elder's grandchildren at events. Be it unconventional technology or participating in an unfamiliar practice, Elders were much more hesitant to participate in the video recording than originally anticipated. It should be noted that the discussion of Elders using video equipment (engaged in during the January meeting) was mainly conducted among members of the research team. No Elders vocalized a desire to participate in the project in the role of videographer. Instead, many of the Elders left the photographing and video recording to members of the research team.

I had hoped that if it was indeed the case that Elders were not comfortable capturing images on video themselves, they would guide those who were, letting us know what was important to document. During events, I did receive requests to record several specific activities. At the Nechako Fraser Métis Culture weekend, there was a request to record the rug hooking workshop as it was unfolding. As the camera work rested solely on the shoulders of Mr. Foster for this event, I alerted him to this request. During the

Photo 3-2: The Rose Prince Alter. July 2004; Fort St. James, British Columbia. Photo: Marni Amirault.

Rose Prince Pilgrimage, Mrs. Aubichon asked me to photograph and video record the Alter. During my field term, I was also made aware that Mr. Paquette's cousin, Leonard Paquette was carving a totem pole in a room at the CN Rail station. It was requested that I conduct an interview with him and record him as he worked. Finally, during the week prior to the Wilkins Park workshop, I was invited to record a hunting trip with two Elders. We didn't get any game, however, two deer were later shot and I was invited to record Mr. Paquette and his granddaughter skinning the animals.

Having no experience with video recording prior to Rose Prince, I was surprised to discover a certain level of personal discomfort when I brought out the camera for the first time. Partly this uneasiness rested in the fact that the first time I video recorded an event, it was a religious pilgrimage; an event I feel is highly personal. I also found recording with video vastly different than recording photographic images. Perhaps this is due to the fact that a video camera records images, sound and motion as they occur.

Present at the Rose Prince Pilgrimage was a husband/wife freelance journalist team who were recording information for an article they had promised to *Canadian Geographic*. Measuring my discomfort against what I saw as the journalists' lack of consideration for the privacy of pilgrimage attendees', one could say that I erred on the side of caution. Also at Rose Prince, a granddaughter of one of the Elders' present asked

me to go with her for a walk. We both brought our cameras with us, but I quickly noticed that she had much less inhibition than I did when it came to capturing images on camera.

Lac Ste. Anne

Initially a place that held great spiritual importance for many First Nations, Lac Ste. Anne was known as Man'tow Sakahikan (Lake of the Spirit), a traditional summer gathering place. The lake held crystal clear waters, fish were plentiful; everything needed for survival was readily available. Man'tow Sakahikan was also "… a sacred lake, a power spot, a place of spiritual renewal" (Simon 1995: 2) where ceremonies weddings and sun dances were held. Man'tow Sakahikan was also a site of trade.

September 8th, 1843, Man'tow Sakahikan was appropriated as the first Catholic mission in the Canadian Northwest by Father Jean-Baptiste Thibault. Thibault chose the site for the surrounding Métis and French-speaking Roman Catholic settlers (http://www.albertasource.ca/methodist/The_Missions/Lac_Ste_Anne.htm Retrieved July 05, 2004). To mark his acquisition, Thibault changed the name from Man'tow Sakahikan, to Lac Ste. Anne, demonstrating the new mission's dedication to Saint Anne Beaupré, mother of the Virgin Mary and grandmother of Jesus (Anderson-McLean:1999).

Upon closer reflection the choice of name Lac Ste. Anne holds even more meaning when the role of the grandmother in Aboriginal culture is examined (Anderson-McLean 1999; Simon 1995). Father Jacques Johnson states

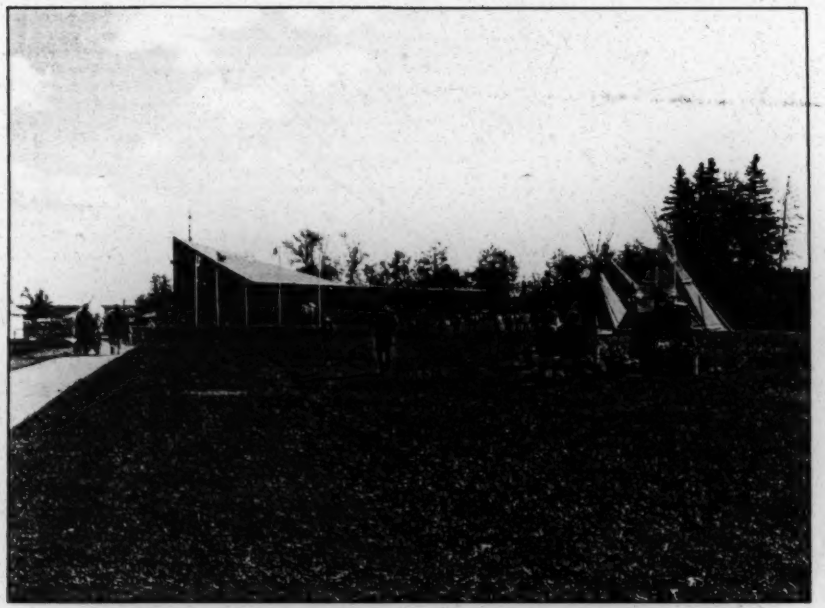
> The reality of St. Anne as being the grandmother of Jesus is something that when I grew up did not exist. It was not until I became a priest that I heard that expression. St. Anne, the grandmother of Jesus. She was the mother of Mary, and we prayed to her because she was the mother of Mary. The First Nations people went one step further because in their culture the grandmother

> means so much. The grandmother is the most important member of the whole family, she is the one that raises the grandchildren and has the greatest influence on the grandchildren, even more so than the mother. She is respected and she is mourned the longest, and that special affection for the grandmother is something that, in a sense, is transferred to St. Anne. The connection being made has to do with the love and affection they have with their own grandmother. They relate to St. Anne as the grandmother of Jesus (Father Jacques Johnson, as cited in Simon 1995: 3).

The first pilgrimage to Lac Ste. Anne occurred June 6th, 1889. One hundred and seventy-one people are reported to have gathered in attendance of this event. A second pilgrimage was held on July 26th of that same year, the day which marks the annual Feast for Saint Anne. From that date onward, pilgrims have made their way to Lac Ste. Anne in celebration of their faith and to wash away sins and find healing on the shores of these sacred waters.

Elders, as well as visitors who stopped in to the PGMES office would often relay to me personal experiences at Lac Ste. Anne in an effort to prepare me for my visit. I was told stories about meeting Dakota House and Jimmi Herman, both cast members from CBC's drama, *North of 60* (1992 – 1998), while other relayed stories about mystical and unexplained phenomenon. 'Be open to everything, and expect it all' was the general message. I was also told to expect large crowds; hundreds of people making their way patiently from one location to another, stopping to meet and greet friends along the way.

Another student who had attended the Pilgrimage with the Elders during her undergraduate degree, once told me that attending the pilgrimage had been such a profound experience, that she strongly contemplated re- joining the Catholic Church she had left behind in her youth.



3-3 The Shrine at Lac Ste. Anne. July 2004, Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta. Photo: Marni Amirault

Making our way along the dusty dirt road leading to the entrance of the Lac Ste. Anne site, with all of these stories in mind, I could not help but wonder what lay in store. The covered, horse – drawn buggy meandering up the road in front of the PGMES bus was indicative of times gone by, but the signs and stalls set up along the roadside hinted at another aspect of Lac. Ste. Anne. These signs would be my introduction to 'the mall', a network of stalls where merchants sold everything from second hand clothes, jewellery and what I call 'carnival novelties', to haircuts, chopped wood and tattoos. The mall was set up through a path in the woods to a slightly off-site locale, and was many Elders' initial destination as soon as they disembarked from the bus.

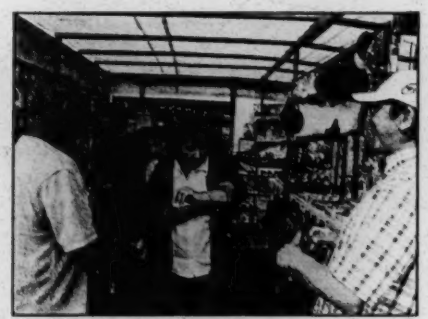


Figure 3-4: The Elders at 'the mall'. July 2004; Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta. Photo: Mike Evans.

The weather during our time at Lac Ste. Anne consisted of wind and drizzle, an

environment not at all conducive to ensuring a large attendance or the Elders' comfort. It was not uncommon to find Elders on the bus during the day, in an effort to stay warm and dry. In general, I was amazed at how few people there were in attendance, even taking into account the weather. The grounds that, in previous years, had been reportedly overflowing with people; many of whom had traveled great distances; were for the 2004 Pilgrimage, empty and exposed.

Several occurrences during the 2004 Pilgrimage ran contrary my expectations. The stories circulating the Lac Ste. Anne grounds 2004 told not of miracles and healing, but of the rape of two very young girls (one aged seven, the other aged twelve) that happened the night before our arrival. The other disturbing event we were informed of happened during the evening between our first and second days at the pilgrimage when a fight broke out between a group of local young men, and pilgrimage attendees. Apparently, one eighteen year old male had had both of his legs broken. The stories I was told at Lac. Ste. Anne were hardly indicative of the experiences that others had related to me prior to our trip.

PGMES president, Mrs. Irene Caplette was the only Elder to say that she had traveled to Lac Ste. Anne as a child. Just prior to our departure from Lac Ste. Anne, directly after the Métis Mass, she granted the research team an impromptu interview. I include the dialogue from the interview, nearly in full, in order to illustrate the changes that have occurred during Mrs. Caplette's life span at this pilgrimage.

> This is nothing, compared to what it was. … there were tents, there were no campers, it was all straight tents. And you brought your own cooking stuff and we'd make our own food. There were no stores … you had to bring your own food.
>
> This whole place [the LSA grounds] was packed. It was straight

tents, it was a tent city. No, this is not, this is a camper city [laughs]. [Today] it's mostly campers, you know, great big motor homes.

And its not like a long time ago. The old people, they were the first ones to go into the church. They let all the Elders go first. And well, the kids would follow the parents. And that's the way we were taught and the parents went, the Elders went and did their confessions first, and then the parents, and then the kids.

There were eight of us in our family, so there was a lot of kids. We had a blast though, you know? We'd run around and it was safe. Like today, you're watching your kids.

Dad used to walk [from Meadow Lake]. He walked all the way. … Mom would drive and the kids were all in the back. Well, we'd get out too, and walk with him. Then we'd get tired, so we'd get back in the wagon. But Dad, he believed in walking all the way, because that was his penance. He'd say that, he says, "I'm not riding, I'm going to walk all the way. But we'd stop. … We wouldn't do very many miles in one day. Maybe twenty, you know, twenty-five. But it was nice. It was nice traveling that way.

We had all our own food. Mom had her bannock, and it was mostly rabbit, and well, Dad used to go hunting in the bush, where ever we stopped, he'd hunt. Kill rabbits and prairie chickens.

My uncles and aunts used to come. And, well, on my dad's side too. It was wagons. Everybody came by wagons. I remember that. I was only five or six. But we'd always come like that every year.

So it was nice. It's not like today. Like today, sure, it's nice too, but it's not the same. And the same thing with the mass. The mass is altogether different. You know, this was a regular mass. … they said prayers, and like you know … [in the past,] it was a high mass.

… can you just imagine coming from Prince George in covered wagons? (laughs) [we traveled on] wagon trails because there weren't that many people that had cars, you know? The ones who passed us, well, they had a vehicle, but they weren't going very fast either because it was a model T … you know, those old cars, they only went, what, 20 miles an hour? So we probably

traveled just as fast as they did …

The only thing they had [back then] was a gift shop. They always sold rosaries, and it wasn't very expensive either, you know. You could buy them for ten cents, twenty-five cents. I think twenty-five cents we the most expensive thing you could buy at that time, because nobody had money. But you worked all year to save your money. We used to go out in the bush and pick blueberries. That was our spending money. We'd sell them … and then Mom would give us our money and we would buy rosaries, what ever we wanted to buy here. But there were no hamburger stands or nothing. You brought your own food and you ate it. And they had to have lots of food. Well, we cooked on a little stove, Dad always had a little stove and that's what we used to cook on. Or else we'd just make an outside fire. Trouble is, we didn't have wieners either, so we couldn't do a wiener roast (laughs).

I miss it, because that was a long time ago, and family was family then too. Everybody went. The whole family went. See, like me, I'm all alone here. My kids are all back home. … And then, my grandmother used to come with us too. My Grandma. When she was single, she had lost her husband so she traveled with us, my aunt. There were five or six sisters on my mom's side, and then, three or four on Dad's side and everybody had a wagon, and we were just like a train. … there would be, I'll bet you ten [all together]. That's what I say, we were just like a you know, just like the old west there, you know, like the old wagon trains.

Everybody came out, and then everybody pitched a tent … they didn't want to be too close, though, to the church. It was always towards the back, close to the water, towards the back there because it was more private, and everybody would get there and there was always somebody that could play the fiddle, the violin, and guitar, and at night, that's what they used to do. … all the kids had a blast, parents and you know, it was fun.

I sort of miss that. But you can't go back. You've got to go ahead. You know, just talking about it makes me sad (laughs). You know. To talk about Mom and Dad and Grandma (pause) well guys, that's it. … I'm not saying anymore. Okay, thank you (Mrs. Irene Caplette video-recording at Lac. Ste. Anne 2004).

From Model T. Fords to the introduction of wieners, Lac Ste. Anne has seen its

share of changes. Several Elders, for example, explained that up until very recently (within the last two years or so) the food at Lac. Ste. Anne had been more traditional fare, offering up dishes like caribou stew and bannock, not the hot dog, hamburgers and French fries offered this particular year. Also present in the above quotation is the very real sense that Lac Ste. Anne is no longer so much a family affair, at least not for Mrs. Caplette. As she laments, she was there 'on her own'.

Filming at Lac Ste. Anne

Photo 3-5: Dr. Evans and Mr. Foster filming LSA's Tent City. Photo: Marni Amirault.

Upon arrival to Lac Ste. Anne, the Elders were greeted by Dr. Evans and Mr. Foster who filmed their exit of the bus, and subsequent entrance to the Pilgrimage. The main event to be filmed by Mr. Foster and Dr. Evans was the Métis Mass, held during our second scheduled day at Lac Ste. Anne. Because Lac Ste. Anne was a public event, it had not occurred to members of the research team to ask for permission to be at the pilgrimage with video cameras. However, upon further reflection, it was decided that we would seek out the proper individual(s) to grant us permission to film the mass the following day.

Mrs. Bortolon directed me toward a well known and prominent Lac Ste. Anne

priest, Father Musqua. Introduced as filmmakers and friends of the Prince George Métis Elders Society, we were granted permission to film anything that was not a First Nations ceremony. Father Musqua told us that the year previous, a camera crew from Radio Canada had taken it upon themselves to film what ever they wanted. The priest had approached them, telling them that they were not welcome to record the event they were filming. He kept an eye on the camera crew, noticing that they still had the video camera rolling, even though they were physically far-removed from the event. He told Mrs. Bortolon and me that he knew the cameras they were using had the capability to film great distances, and so approached the crew again, this time telling them to turn off their equipment.

I have also recorded (both in my journal, and in one instance, on camera[2]) where people at Lac Ste. Anne were visibly uncomfortable with the presence of the camera. This was the case especially during the Métis mass. Perhaps it was my own, personal discomfort that fostered a projected discomfort in others present. Pilgrimage attendees could have mistaken us for returned Radio Canada employees, or people may have felt that they had no say in the fact that we were there, filming events as they interested us. I am aware of individuals who were uncomfortable with our camera's presence at this particular event, and openly discussed this discomfort with colleagues of mine.

Wilkins Park

The above discussion outlines events attended by the PGMES during the month of July, 2004. As previously stated, these events were public, organized by groups outside of the PGMES but nevertheless scheduled into the PGMES calendar for the enjoyment

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[2] I have chosen not to include these photos as individuals caught on camera were not of members of the PGMES.

and pleasure of the Elders. Lac Ste. Anne, Rose Prince and the Cottonwood Music Festival are also events that the Elders attend as members of the PGMES annually. On the weekend of September 11th and 12th, 2004, the PGMES Oral History Video Project held a video workshop for Elders and their families at Wilkins Park, fourteen kilometres west of Prince George.

The idea of a video workshop was conceived during the first meeting between the PGMES and the researchers, held in January 2004. Tsitniz Lake, approximately 60 kilometres southwest of Prince George, was the location of choice for the amenities it provides. As the date grew closer, however, the PGMES learned the Nechako Fraser Métis Elders had booked this location for a Turkey Shoot and Picnic on the same weekend as our upcoming event. Of note, the Nechako Fraser Métis Elders had sent the PGMES an invitation to this same event in July, but their picnic had been set for a different date. It was suspected the date for the Nechako Fraser event changed because PGMES had not issued a direct invitation for the Nechako Fraser Elders Society to participate in their workshop. Some Elders, as mentioned previously, hold positions on the board of directors for both organizations, however, they had not been informed of a date change prior to the PGMES receiving their invitation to the Nechako Fraser event. Whatever the case, PGMES Elders were visibly upset by the changes.

To inform members of the PGMES event, there had been a written invitation sent to Elders' homes. Also, prior to the event, the PGMES members' list was called, a list of compiled members; past and present, lapsed and honoured; amounted to over 100 people in total. It is possible that Elders who had left the PGMES to form an alliance with the Nechako Fraser Elders' group had been included on this list. Elders were invited and

encouraged to include family members of all generations, especially grandchildren, to this event. For the most part, Elders who participated in the video workshop were the more active individuals in the PGMES.

Prior to the video workshop, a granddaughter of one of the Elders confided to me that she and other members of her family were planning on attending this workshop because they knew the importance of this event to her grandmother. Indeed, during the weekend, many children and grandchildren were in attendance.

At the very first meeting of the PGMES and the research team, Mrs. Caplette was seated directly across the table from me. During the discussion aimed at generating ideas for the video project, she engaged me in a conversation about the rugs her mother used to make when she was a young girl by braiding strips of fabric torn from old sheets together. The braids were wrapped in a circle and sewn together. Mrs. Caplette told me that she had tried to learn, but remembered having trouble when it came time to sewing the braided strands together; if not done properly, the rug would turn upwards and not lay flat on the floor. Before I left Nova Scotia to come to U of A, I noticed people were making these rugs to sell to tourists at craft shows and artisan shops. A friend of mine had purchased one for her bedroom floor and it was quite beautiful. I told Mrs. Caplette that I thought that if the PGMES made these rugs, they could be sold for a relatively high price.

As I was well aware, many present day indigenous filmmakers "... are using screen media not to mask but to recuperate their own collective stories and histories ... that have been erased in the national narratives of the dominant culture and are in danger of being forgotten within local worlds as well" (Ginsburg 2002a: 40). The evening before the Nechako Fraser event in March, I learned that a rug braiding workshop was

scheduled. Unaware that we would not be working with the PGMES this on this particular occasion, I recounted the conversation between Mrs. Caplette and myself to Dr. Evans and Mr. Foster. I was excited that an idea discussed during our January meeting was being brought to fruition so soon.

An additional, personal hope I held for the project was that we would be able to facilitate a process of remembering and recovery within the Métis community. During our discussion, Dr. Evans reiterated to me that the Métis Elders were trying to reclaim part of their lives, and that, as difficult as it was, the only tool some of the Elders had to guide them through this process, was memory. Mrs. Caplette was not present at the Nechako Fraser culture weekend, a Nechako Fraser member acted as workshop facilitator to teach rug braiding.

Photo 3-7: Mrs. Caplette demonstrating rug braiding for her family at the Wilkins Park workshop. September 2004; Prince George, British Columbia.

However, during the Saturday afternoon at Wilkins Park, Mrs. Caplette did share her knowledge of rug braiding, passed to her from her mother, with her own children and grandchildren. Tucked away in a corner of the park, her daughters gathered with their children to hear her stories and receive instruction. Mrs. Caplette's family members attended the Wilkins Park workshop mainly to participate in her presentation. They left soon after her workshop had concluded.

Not only did the children and grandchildren of the PGMES Elders attend the event, many made themselves available to lend a helping hand where needed; cooking fresh salmon and moose roast, chopping wood for the stove and fire boxes and so on. Some relatives, however, were a little too young to participate in such ways.

Photo 3-7: Catching Grandpa taking a snooze. September 2004, Wilkins Park, Prince George, British Columbia. Photo: Mike Evans.

Having not imposed a schedule, Dr. Evans and Mr. Foster followed the Elders' lead in structuring events as they occurred during the Wilkins Park event. One of the goals the research team did entertain during this weekend was recording interviews with Elders on video. Prior to the Wilkins Park workshop, Dr. Evans and I discussed a noticeable reluctance on the part of the Elders to grant interviews (field notes, September, 10 2004). Elders were however, willing to be filmed and photographed while engaging in activities. The mention of an interview, however, caused a certain level of stress.

One consideration is simply that Elders are uncomfortable conducting formal and informal interviews. Many times, when I attempted to hold a discussion on video with an Elder, they would simply reply that they had nothing to say. When the camera was turned off, or put away, they would talk freely and become more natural.

Another goal was to provide an opportunity for video and photography skills

transfer among the Elders as well as members of the younger generations present. The main move toward this end resulted in disposable cameras being distributed to the grandchildren present (see Photo 3-9 above). To my knowledge, no Elders participated in the recording of events on video although Mrs. Cardinal mentioned several times that she had a video camera at home that she wanted to bring to Wilkins' Park. Although she brought a 33m.m. camera with her on the road trips we went on throughout the summer, this was the first time I had heard mention made of a video camera.

Chapter IV

Hierarchy and collaboration in filmmaking

When conducting research for my undergraduate thesis, Mr. John Houston of Triad Films and I discussed the hierarchical structure of film as it related to Isuma Igloolik Productions. Isuma's representatives claimed to employ a new and balanced dissemination of direction, as well as a decision making process that took into account the points of view of all actors and staff. During an interview with director Zacharias Kunuk, I learned that for the production of *Atanarjuat: the Fast Runner* (and subsequently, all Isuma's films) Isuma employed what they called 'Inuit filmmaking techniques'.

When asked to define Inuit filmmaking techniques, Kunuk stated that for him, at least, they can be best exemplified

> … [i]n the way we work, we work as a team. Just like hunting seal, trying to drive the animal to at least one of them [hunters]. If they get it, we all get to eat. It's just the same thing. Whether I am the director, or the wardrobe [person], we all have equal say in what we see and what we like.
>
> If we were a Qallunaat [non-Inuit] crew, the director talks to probably the assistant director. In our case, I mean, that's what we've been arguing, that we have a style of filmmaking, and this is how we do it. Directors talk to the lowest people in the Inuit system, in our system, [it's] called team work (as cited in Amirault 2001: 54 – 55).

For Houston, the idea of a filmmaker engaging cast and crew in the film's final and major decisions challenged his own experiences in the film industry.

The ideas outlined in the above quotation by Kunuk were ideals that I carried in to the PGMES Oral History Video project. In retrospect, there were several issues I had not taken into account. Inuit have had a long exposure to filmmaking, acting in the role of

both media consumers and producers (Alia 1999; Ginsburg 2002a; Poisey 1999; Valaskakis 1982). Also, taking into account the fact that Isuma's filmmaking team is comprised of an all Inuk crew (with the exception of native New Yorker, Norman Cohn) it should come as no surprise that since the 1980s, Kunuk has developed and implemented culturally relevant techniques in Isuma's filmmaking in an attempt to combat the sometimes sordid history of filmmaking among Inuit communities.

Another important consideration here is the use of, and concerns surrounding language. The community of Igloolik, Nunavut has been characterized as Nunavut's 'Cultural Capital' where traditional hunting occurs, Elders still know the sewing techniques passed to them from their grandmothers and most of Igloolik's residents are fluent in Inuktitut (Dorais and Sammons 2002). Isuma's primary language of operation is Inuktitut (with the obvious exception of Norman Cohn) also, *Atanarjuat* is the first international feature-length film to have been produced in an Inuit language and subtitled. In an interview with Nancy Wachowich, Paul Apak of Isuma explains: "It's all going to be in Inuktitut in the first place. And also, all of the actors will have to be Inuk. No Japanese or whoever pretend to be Inuit. You know, it will be done the Inuit way. We want it to be like the way things happened in real life" (as cited in Apak 2002).

One of Isuma's actors with whom I spoke, had experience working on several non-Inuit productions, including *The Stranger: Kabloonak* (1994), which tells the story of Flaherty's experiences in the Canadian Arctic that eventually led to the production of *Nanook of the North*. When asked if he had experienced a notable difference between working on the two films, he replied that "... working with Isuma on the side has been good. More likely [I am] comfortable by talking to them ... using my own language" (as

cited in Amirault 2001: 52). The use of Inuktitut in Atanarjuat's films should be seen not only as a political statement. Inuktitut is used simply because it is the language spoken in Igloolik, the language people most often operate in.

During my time with the Métis Elders, English was the only language I heard spoken. As in the case of the Métis definition, it seems there is ambiguity surrounding the official language of the Métis as well. During the Métis National conference 2004, I attended a workshop that discussed Mi'chif, a mixed language formed with the strengthening of both trade and marriage ties between the Cree and French fur traders. There are only a few thousand speakers of Mi'chif known in North America; however, efforts are being made to revive the language.

During the January meeting, one Elder stated that the language of the Métis is Cree, not Mi'chif, and said that Cree should be included as a component of the PGMES Oral History Video Project (field notes 2004). This Elder teaches Cree to young children in the Prince George area, and also offered a workshop in Cree during the Nechako Fraser culture workshop held March, 2004. In *Language, Politics and Social Interaction in an Inuit Community*, Donna Patrick, citing Bordieu, states that "one of the greatest difficulties of defending a threatened language is that one cannot do so without also defending the social conditions under which this language is valued" (2004: 100). It is possible then, that the use of Mi'chif in the lives of PGMES Elders has fallen out of use in favour of the Cree language, which is spoken by a larger number of people throughout Canada and therefore holds more of Bordieu's cultural capital for the Métis than the Mi'chif language.

In Prince George, the PGMES Elders are engaging in a process of remembering.

Unlike the community of Igloolik, where northern isolation has facilitated and fostered traditional culture practices through time, Prince George is a northern equivalent of a cosmopolitan city. There have been many cultural influences bearing down on all residents, starting with the fur trade, and continuing to present day. Some of the more traditional aspects of Métis culture have fallen out of practice in the face of modern and in some cases, more convenient ways. It seems, in fact, that the PGMES are constantly negotiating 'what it is to be a Métis'. One clear example is the replacement of house to house visits; an important aspect of Métis culture, with the inclusion of potlucks in the monthly calendar. Engagement in the PGMES video project is another.

My own experiences as a researcher in Igloolik and in Prince George were vastly different. In Igloolik, I investigated the effects of film production on the community after the film's completion. Conversely, in Prince George, I was a participant in the filmmaking process. This engagement allowed me an opportunity to foster more intimate relationships with the film's subjects, the PGMES Elders. My involvement in the process also provided a clearer picture of the process all parties worked through. Four years later, I am still learning new things about Isuma and the effects that filming *Atanarjuat* had on the community and its residents.

Participatory cinema, as outlined by Visual anthropologist, David MacDougall, can be seen as a process of "... the filmmaker combining the skills and sensibilities of the subjects with his or her own. This requires that, whatever the differences, at least they have in common a sense that a film is worth making' (1998: 134). Another, similar and widely used term, *observational cinema*

> ...is based on the fundamental premise that films should arise out of the film-maker's intimate, sensitive and

> sympathetic relationship with his/her subjects – with the film-maker watching 'as much as possible from the inside' (Young, p. 76) rather than operating in an aloof and detached manner. This sensitivity is reflected in the fact that the mandate for the film comes from the subjects. The film-maker does not impose direction, but instead allows the space for the film to be heavily shaped by its protagonists (Moggan 2005: 31).

In the case of participatory or observational cinema then, individuals are seen to contribute in proportion to their strengths, and not in the fairly regimented way I had initially conceived.

The biggest hope held for this project was that the Elders engage themselves in the process of video recording. The creation of images by Elders would surrender the research team's authority (Evans and Foster 2003) while at the same time lend itself to the creation of a visual window into the life of a Prince George Métis Elder. Where the research team hoped collaboration would necessitate Elders picking up video cameras to record events as they unfolded, the Elders had a very different idea of what our roles would be. In fact, it may be the case that throughout the processes of meetings and workshops, roles were established by some and assumed by others, so that the Elders predominantly came to be the subjects of the video and members of the research team the videographers and photographers in the group.

Elders contributed to this project in ways that were comfortable and important to them. Allowing themselves to be videotaped, for example, or by granting interviews and bringing to the PGMES office personal photos taken independently from research but to be used in project materials. The PGMES also took the initiative of scheduling and organizing the events that came to be committed to film, such as the Wilkins Park workshop, the road trips I accompanied the PGMES on, and the initial meeting January,

2004. In retrospect, the *only* thing that PGMES members did not do, that the research team hoped they would, was video tape events as they unfolded.

Storage of material and information sharing

The issue of storage of research materials and the subsequent availability of these materials to project participants, especially when members are spread across three towns in two provinces, is of importance to discuss as well. With digital technology, dissemination and sharing of materials is quite possible. Indeed, any photographic or video images I requested to have sent to me for the writing of this thesis have been made available. Also, I am aware that in instances where events such as the Métis mass at Lac Ste. Anne are concerned, an effort was made to collect addresses ensuring a copy of recorded material be sent to the priests who performed the mass (Evans/Foster personal communication July 2004).

While dissemination of imagery is relatively simple with digital technology, archiving and storage remains a complex issue. The primary research materials reside at the Okanagan University College. This arrangement has been made for two reasons. First, there is no adequate storage facility for video materials in Prince George. The PGMES office is already over crowded with craft, bingo and other supplies, not to mention computers, file cabinets and additional office paraphernalia. Secondly, it is important to note that editing for the PGMES Oral History Video Project will occur at Can West Global Centre for Artist Video, a state of the art editing facility, housed in the OUC Fine Arts Department, in Kelowna, British Columbia where PGMES project materials are being stored. The project's REB application states that students of the OUC Fine Arts Department, under the direction of Mr. Foster, "...will assist in production and

post production roles [as well as] in the construction of the interactive components" (Evans & Foster, 2004).

The fact that this project is undertaken by people living in three provinces generates its own issues and challenges, especially when considering storage and sharing of video material. On two occasions, Elders requested to view film footage that had been recorded during a meeting or workshop. One request occurred directly after the meeting held in January, and was brought to my attention by Dr. Daveluy. The other occurred as Mr. Foster, Dr. Evans and I were leaving the Nechako Fraser Métis culture workshop in March. Of note, these requests were made at the end of both events, once equipment had been dismantled and put away. The request I witnessed was made as we were leaving the community hall to return to our hotel.

These requests brought attention to the fact that a collaboration partner did not have equal access to the material, which should be seen as problematic. Conversely, one could see these requests as an effort by the Elders to establish a continuing role in the project. When taking in to consideration that one of the two requests was made by a founding member of the Nechako-Fraser Métis group at the conclusion of their culture workshop in March, this theory is quite feasible especially when considering that this organization's involvement in the video project was a one-time event.

Also important for consideration here, is ownership of finished products. During the January meeting, this issue was placed on the table for discussion. It was stated that the video and subsequent materials to result from the project would be property of the PGMES and the research team. Since this was to be a video about the PGMES and their community; it made sense that the PGMES have co-ownership of materials produced

through this collaboration.

The project's REB application, submitted to the new SSHRC pilot program "Research/Creation Grants in Fine Arts, states that "[c]opyright of the broadcast documentary and all broadcast quality video material will be with the director/video artist: copyright on the other research products will be shared evenly between the research team and the Prince George Métis Elders Society" (Evans & Foster 2004). It was later explained that this arrangement was made because Mr. Foster is viewed as the project Artist-Researcher, or principal investigator, and that "[c]opyright and any rights to intellectual property developed under SSHRC funding are owned by the applicant (principal investigators) and co-applicant (co-investigators) ..." (http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/policies/g _copyright_e.asp# Retrieved October 17, 2005).

The issue of ownership of the final video is of concern. The PGMES Elders initiated this project in order to create a film "... that will both represent their community to others, and serve as a record for youth in the future" (Evans and Foster 2003). While the Elders' goals remain true for the research team, it must be said that the video is being created with additional goals of film festival screenings and other cinematic ventures in mind. The end product has the potential to be much more widely received than a strictly academic work. Also, this project is funded by a newly created grant for an institution with its own agenda to which investigators must adhere. Products generated from SSHRC funded initiatives, generally speaking, take the guise of Masters or PhD. theses and other academic publications where authorship most often lies with the researcher alone. Where does that leave multi-vocal, community-based research project like this

one? This limitation to copyright parameters of materials produced through a Fine Arts SSHRC-funded initiative contrasts the egalitarian and collaborative ethos of the PGMES project and presumably other initiatives with similar goals and objectives.

Editing

One point of this thesis has been to illustrate the importance of image making, and its potential effects on a people. As stated by Jay Ruby in *Picturing Culture,* "[b]efore every city block has its own police surveillance camera, news service, visual ethnographer, and resident visual artist, it is essential that we have a better understanding of how the decision to use someone else's image is made and where responsibilities lie" (Ruby 2000: 138). To this end, editing should be seen as one of the more important phases of a video project due to what it entails: "... cutting, selecting and recombining sections of raw video (rushes) so as to construct a condensed and reordered representation of the activities and events covered in the raw original ..." (Turner 2002: 79). The editing studio is where all of the important decisions pertaining to representation get made.

The above issues as they pertain to editing were initially raised for me during a class assignment in Anth 585, Visual Anthropology where students were asked to craft a film, from start to finish. The class was divided into two groups of four students and given carte-blanche to create a ten minute ethnographic video. Initially, our group decided that consensus decision making would be practiced throughout all aspects of our project. This proved to be a decision in theory alone due to the differing opinions of the strong personalities of four individuals who didn't always see eye to eye. Of important note, were the cross-cultural dynamics occurring within the group. Our film was made,

but not without a lot of heartache and strife.

Due to time constraints brought on by the end of term, and despite our idealist attempt at consensus decision making, it was agreed that the brunt of the editing would be designated to one member of our team. Prior to the editing process, all four students consented to trust this member's decisions as editor, and lend a hand in the lab when paper writing and studying for examinations permitted. The role of editor was given to the student who had done what was perceived to be a seamless job in editing a previous class assignment and who also carried a lighter end-of-semester work load.

Our video was an ethnographic study of a family whose parents had moved to Canada from Hong Kong. Our research team consisted of two students who had been born in Asia, and two students born in Canada. When the two Asian students went in to the computer lab to view the work that our editor (a Caucasian Canadian student) had done, they were both extremely upset, and concerned for the fate or our project. It was felt that the way the video had been edited was extremely mis-representative of the family we had met. It was also thought that this video; the way it stood; used offensive clichés and symbolism to tell part of this family's story. Our editor, on the other hand, did not see where the problems with her editing lay and was very upset that her work was being received as it was. My designated role was that of 'producer' and as such, I was asked to keep everyone on track, and also act as the go between throughout this often times emotional project.

Ultimately, the group agreed to create a second video, re-using the rushes, or raw footage we had collected for the first video, but *this* time, all four group members would be equally engaged in the editing process. The resulting product was one that healed the

wounds of the first. All students were proud of the final edit and, most importantly, felt comfortable sharing it with the family who had graciously invited us into their homes and their lives so that we could produce this class assignment. I discuss this project at length to further illustrate the point that some of the most important decisions get made in the editing bay. Culture of origin interacts with subject matter to produce meaning and allow interpretation in multiple ways. In many respects, this process is much more complex than one of intensions and goes to deeper structures of how people see and experience the world and themselves in it.

In the case of the PGMES Oral History Video Project, it remains to be seen whether or not the Elders will choose to include themselves in the process of editing. Several things impede their involvement. First and foremost is the location of the editing studio. Elders would have to travel from Prince George to Kelowna in order to participate. Of additional consideration is the *extremely* time consuming process of editing. In Anthropology 585, we were told that to edit our ten minute video, we should expect to spend *at least* twenty-five hours in the computer lab. Furthermore, and as discussed above, the Elders' notion of collaboration may play a part role in the dissemination of duties among project participants, choosing to leave this technical and tedious task to others.

Alternative methods involving Elders in the process of editing can be sought, however. During my return flight from Prince George, September 2004, Dr. Evans and I discussed the possibility of screening a near completed version of the video prior to its distribution, eliciting comments and feedback from the Elders. The importance of Elders' participation in the process of editing is clear; however, it is up to the Elders

themselves to decide whether or not they wish to be involved, and in what way.

Chapter V
Concluding thoughts

This thesis addresses the question of whether filmmaking can be a collaborative, inclusive process, challenging the norms of the hierarchical structure inherent in the filmmaking process. Chapter I discusses the importance of self-representation in film as it pertains to Aboriginal cultures with special attention given to the Aboriginal People's Television Network. This chapter also aims to familiarize the reader with literature pertaining to participatory research as it has been incorporated in the process of filmmaking.

Chapter II introduces the community of Prince George and the Prince George Métis Elders' Society. Particular attention is paid to the function of the PGMES in the lives of Métis Elders, emphasizing the importance of the activities and services offered by this organization. Chapter III discusses the PGMES Oral History Video Project from its inception until my own participation in this project came to a close. As participant observation was the primary method of investigation, this chapter should be treated primarily as a discussion of methods and data. Chapter IV discusses the complexities that accompany the production of community-based multi-media project, highlighting my conceptions of roles, processes and interests. The following concluding thoughts are offered as an answer the question posed in the beginning of this thesis.

In *Participation: the New Tyranny,* David Mosse states that the problem with participation research lies in the fact that for the most part, "[p]roject actors are not passive facilitators of local knowledge production and planning. They shape and direct these processes. At the most basic level, project staff 'own' the research tools, choose the topics, record the information, and abstract and summarize according to project criteria of

relevance" (Mosse 2001:~19). In order to respond to the above quotation, we must be mindful of both the realities and intricacies involved in a collaborative film project of this nature. While it is true that equipment was made available to the project through grants secured by the research team, the PGMES video project occurred because of a direct request from the Elders for Dr. Evans' assistance with this initiative. It would be unreasonable, for example, to expect the PGMES to be in possession of their own video equipment and editing suite. It must also be said that the PGMES did contribute to the 'shaping and directing' of this project in ways that were most feasible to them.

Project actors are not pretending to be 'passive facilitators of local knowledge production and planning' as Mosse seems to suggest. Throughout the production, a distinct effort was made to "...work closely with the community to have the video process evident with in the documentary" (Evans and Foster 2003). Is it reasonable, in the case of a collaborative effort to expect members of the research team to not contribute to the 'shaping and directing' of the resulting product? From my perspective, all parties have carried necessarily vested interests, as well as complementary goals to their participation. As with Kunuk's Inuit film techniques modeled after the seal hunt, participants were given authority to direct and contribute as they saw fit.

Of interest here, is a conversation initiated at the conclusion of the weekend at Wilkins Park. While cleaning up the picnic shelter where our supplies were kept, Dr. Evans and I (Mr. Foster had to leave midway through the workshop to return to his teaching duties at the Okanagan University College) were asked by Mrs. Bortolon if we were getting what we needed, wanted and expected by way of material for the video project. This inquiry illustrates the perception from the PGMES that the research team

held the role of filmmakers. More importantly, however, this question also initiated a group discussion pertaining to the learning curves *all* project participants had been navigating. The Elders, many of whom had not participated in the making of a video before were learning how to be video subjects. Mr. Foster; who is trained as an artist filmmaker; was learning the intricacies of working on a community-based film project, while Dr. Evans and I were learning to be filmmakers. The point was clearly made this afternoon, that all participants were navigating their way through the project and its numerous unfamiliar roles and issues as they arose.

As stated by Ruby, for "... most filmmakers, film is a vehicle for the expression of their sensibilities, and the filmmaker's view is paramount, even when the film's goal is to present the actuality of other people's lives" (2000: 197). In a project where an attempt to represent many voices is being made the question, "whose story is it?" (MacDougall 1998) begs reflection.

Through the course of writing this thesis, one thing has become increasingly clear; while this discussion focuses on filmmaking, it has also extracted from the process the vital importance of relationship building to participants. The project was born of a direct request from the Elders to Dr. Evans to assist in the creation of the pending video; a request that would not have been made if the relationship between the two parties had not been productive and mutually gratifying in the past. Dr. Evans and Mr. Foster assisted the PGMES by providing the equipment and skills necessary in the creation of a video, expanding the parameters of the request to include the potential for other products, such as the CD rom and web site. They also provided the bulk of the monetary means required to make the joint endeavour a possibility.

The Elders, on the other hand, offered themselves as video subjects. They also organized events they wished to have committed to film and welcomed new people, myself included, graciously into the project. Another of the research team's mandates is to assist the PGMES in the fulfillment of one of their most important goals, that of ensuring the work produced "is both a product of, and a commentary on, contesting cultural identities" (David MacDougall, as cited in Evans and Foster 2003).

For my part, I acted as a liaison between the PGMES membership and Dr. Evans and Mr. Foster while I was in Prince George. My primary duty as a member of the research team was to assist in the recording of events. My placement in the community and at the PGMES office, ensured that I was kept abreast of events as they occurred and able to assist in troubleshooting when necessary. The most poignant example of this is just prior to the Wilkins' Park workshop when we learned that the Nechako-Fraser Elders had booked Tsitniz Lake for the same weekend. Ms. Bortolon was out of town on business for most of the week prior to the event; as a result, the Elders looked to me to make alternate arrangements for our workshop. The Elders' trust in me had been built through the work I assisted them with in the office, as well as through the social time that we spent together. Collaborative research is thus as much concerned with the mundane organization of everyday life as it is with the intellectual and representational issues which arise and support it.

In the community, I was able to provide the research team with potential video materials that had not been previously conceived. During the summer, I had been asked by one of the Elders in the community to video tape his cousin, a Métis carver who had lived part of his life on the West Coast of British Columbia where he learned various

West coast carving techniques that he combined, creating his own signature carving style. When I made mention of this to Dr. Evans and Mr. Foster, they agreed that a follow-up, more in depth interview could prove to be an interesting addition to the video.

As mentioned above, upon my arrival to Prince George, I was informed that I would act as a volunteer in the PGMES office. Ms. Bortolon had a list of projects for me to tackle, the most important of which was the application for the rescinded Bingo licence. I also helped the PGMES with the editing, writing and submission of other proposals for health-related initiatives and new projects they were embarking on as well. As time went on, I came to be relied on for the scheduling of board meetings and other PGMES events both related and unrelated to the PGMES Oral History Video Project. At the beginning of the summer, the PGMES had received funding to hire a summer student through the Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association (PGNAETA) program. I assisted in the hire and training of an Aboriginal youth who would work in the office and take over my duties when I returned to Edmonton in August.

In addition to being a Master's student, a field researcher, an office administrator, grant writer, and videographer, I sometimes found myself in the role of Métis youth while in Prince George. Youth in Métis communities are expected to assist their Elders whenever help is requested or needed. Often youth serve meals and beverages to Elders during public events and help more senior Elders who have trouble with mobility by lending a hand when climbing stairs, entering and exiting vehicles, and so on. I was also informed that I should expect to be run off my feet during while assisting the Elders during the pilgrimages we attended. I could expect to be asked to have items blessed by

priests, to collect Holy water, to run errands for the Elders and so on. Contrary to expectations, I oftentimes had to ask the Elders directly if there were things they needed or wanted me to assist them with.

The assumption of the role of Métis youth sometimes affected my freedom to record events. One example was during the drive to Lac Ste. Anne, when the Elders decided that they wanted to play Bingo on the bus; my immediate response was to turn on the video camera and record the event. I was quickly informed however, that I was going to be the Bingo caller and I could forget video recording! I suspect this was a polite way of telling me that the Elders needed a break from being filmed.

I also carried luggage when it was being loaded on to the bus and helped the Elders themselves if they required assistance boarding or disembarking, for example. Contributing to events in this way helped foster relationships with the Elders in a very short time. In the end, I felt it was more important to contribute by helping in this way than making sure that everything was being video recorded, hoping that my actions reflected respect and a willingness on my part to help.

To return to David MacDougall's question; whose story will be told in the PGMES Oral History Video Project, we must take into account the nature of the initiative. This was a collaborative effort; where all parties came together to influence and contribute to the final product in a myriad of ways. While the premise of the resulting video will be a visual representation of what it means to be a member of the Prince George Métis Elders' Society, the research team has stated in their grant and ethics proposals the intent of making the film process apparent in the final product. In addition to the Elders' story, this video will consciously illustrate to its audience the story inherent

in the creation processes that all members of this collaborative effort have engaged in.

As MacDougall reminds us, "[t]he few hundred feet of a film create, in effect, one large freeze frame" (1998: 33) one point in time, when certain events unfolded. Since my field term in Prince George, the lives of the Elders have continued to move forward, bringing many changes to the PGMES and its membership. The PGMES office now has a permanent office administrator to ensure that the office runs smoothly and continues its operation. Regrettably, they have also lost one of their beloved members, Mrs. Florence Aubichon, to cancer this past summer. Mrs. Aubichon's passing only adds a sense of urgency to the importance of projects such as the PGMES Oral History Video project.

As this thesis shows, issues surrounding participatory filmmaking are complex. By examining the PGMES Video Project through the perspective of 'participatory filmmaking', can we say, conclusively that this was indeed a collaborative undertaking? As I have illustrated throughout this thesis, all participants contributed their strengths to the project, filling in gaps, as the project required. Most participants navigated personal as well as professional learning curves through out their involvement. What more can be asked?

The Elders may not have taken video cameras in their hands, and their participation in the editing process is yet to be seen, however, without their input, this project would certainly have faltered. Furthermore, perhaps the method of participatory research, in this case, filmmaking, should be afforded ultimate fluidity in its definition. Just as every community is unique in its composition, every project brings to the table its own set of participants, mandates and challenges.

Photo 5-1: Marni Amirault and Stephen Foster at Lac Ste. Anne. July 2004, Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta. Photo: Mike Evans.

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